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THE DIARY
OF ONE OF
GARIBALDI'S THOUSAND

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THE DIARY
of one of
GARIBALDI'S THOUSAND

GIUSEPPE CESARE ABBA

Translated with an Introduction by
E. R. VINCENT

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INTRODUCTION

GIUSEPPE CESARE ABBA, an unknown young man of twenty-two, started on his great adventure as one of Garibaldi's volunteers in 1860, with two ambitions; to strike a blow for the new Italy and to write the epic poem of the Sicilian expedition. His material equipment was not large: an old musket, a bayonet, and twenty cartridges for Italy, and a little pocket-book for the poem. He relied on his youth, his brave spirit, and his romantic imagination to help him play the Tyrtaeus.

It is the notebook, in which he jotted down his impressions in intervals between the marches and skirmishes of irregular warfare, that forms the basis of the present book. The poem was eventually written (*Arrigo, Da Quarto al Volturno*, 1866), but it was not a very good poem and few have read it. The prose amplification of the little notebook has, however, become a precious possession of the Italian people, who treasure it as an authentic reflection of the spirit that inspired the best of those who made Italy. It has often been re-published in its original language, but never before in English.

The *Noterelle*, as its author modestly called the book, is not only an historical document which has proved a useful source of first-hand information for later writers, it is also a conscious work of literature. For twenty years after the events he describes Abba worked on the bare bones of his notes, enriching them from his unfading memories of the epic occasion in which he had played a part. The book is therefore a combination of present observation and later recollection. One of the translator's difficulties has been to follow the swing of Abba's verbs to and fro between the now and the then.

History is the record of what happened, and also of how we think, on incomplete evidence, it did happen. History tells us that on a certain day in 1860 Garibaldi sailed from Genoa with a small body of men in two ships, touched at Talamone, landed at Marsala, clashed with the Bourbon troops at

Calatafimi, and deceived his enemy by feints at Palermo while circling the city, which he entered by the Termini Gate. After bluffing a greatly superior garrison into capitulation he marched to Messina after assuring his flank by overcoming the Bourbon garrison of Milazzo. With greatly increased numbers he crossed the Straits; traversed Calabria; entered Naples; fought a pitched battle on the River Volturno after junction with Piedmontese regular troops; met Victor Emmanuel; handed over his power to the King, and gracefully retired to Caprera. That is what happened and nothing can change it now, but it might have happened quite differently. He might not have gone first to Sicily, but followed the advice of his Mazzinian friends and advanced from Talamone to attack Rome. Had he succeeded in landing in Sicily he might easily have been turned back from Calatafimi and retired to the mountains to organize the Sicilian insurgents, as many expected him to do. He might have played a waiting game. He might not have wished to invade the mainland. He might have met the Piedmontese troops as enemies rather than friends. He might have been rude to the King. These are the things that did not happen; they are not history. A diary written when events are unfolding, and before it is known how they will unfold, reflects all the uncertainties of the actual moment. Abba's *Noterelle* is, in part, such a book and in his pages we are able to experience the doubts, fears, and hopes that filled the minds of those who participated in the hazards of an enterprise now congealed into the set form of history. At the end we share with him the disillusion of the soldier when the battle is won and the politicians come in.

At the start all is confusion. Where is Garibaldi? What are his intentions? They say 30,000 insurgents are besieging Palermo. Surely Garibaldi must respond to such a situation. But is it true? There are no beds to be had in Genoa. The place is swarming with exuberant chattering young men. The inns are packed with excited customers, eating, drinking, and for ever talking. 'It's absolutely disgraceful,' says the elderly gentleman, 'whatever right have these turbulent people to go

invading the country of His Majesty the King of Naples? Whatever is the world coming to?' And off he goes. What is that song that young Doctor Bandini is singing:

*Eran trecento, eran giovani e forti
E sono morti.*

Yes, Pisacane tried the same thing three years before and failed, and where are his young men? *E sono morti*. They are all dead!

Then before you properly know what is happening you're on board a small steamship packed with strangers, mostly young men, but also old men of seventy and little boys of twelve. All is confusion and only a few have any arms at all, and nearly all are unknown to one another. What an extraordinary way to start an invasion! But after all you're not going to Sicily; your ship and its consort approach the Tuscan shore and cast anchor. You land with the rest and while the others strip and bathe you enter the small, cool, dark, church. How will all this end? You feel disturbed and not at all heroic and you write home to tell your parents what you have done and where you are. Then someone says Sicily is off, the aim is Rome; and when the orders come to re-embark, quite a few refuse and Zambianchi, cursing the priests, leaves with a small band to attack the Papal states on his own. The Thousand are now less than a thousand, but you have a rusty old rifle and wonder where the splendid new carbines are that were promised earlier. But Garibaldi has got some artillery from the fortress and, with twenty cartridges each, who knows what cannot be done.

Bixio is always cursing, he finds two or three men dressed in red shirts. 'Take those things off at once!' he shouts. 'What do you think you are, Turks?' He, or you, or they, little know that you will all wear red shirts in the history books. Long, boring hours pass as you sail over a smooth sea to an unknown fate.

Then on the far horizon a looming appearance that is not sea. It is Sicily, the 'Sant'isola'. All the Sicilians aboard crowd the bows, for they are coming home after exile. A small

ship flying the English flag comes from the direction of land. Bixio puts his hands to his mouth and shouts: 'Tell them at Genoa that General Garibaldi landed at one o'clock this afternoon at Marsala.' So history anticipates the event it chronicles. At least you know where you have landed! It seems doubtful, however, if you will land, for in the offing there are the dim forms of warships. But you do land under the shells of the Bourbon ships and here you are sitting on a warm stone writing in your pocket-diary. Now many seem to be wearing red shirts. The General has seen the propaganda value of red shirts. Off you go among the vineyards and then across barren desolate country on the first of many weary marches to unknown destinations. Nobody tells you anything. At the first halt you have some news: 'Garibaldi has assumed the dictatorship of the island in the name of Italy and Victor Emmanuel.' You think that is all right but many do not, for this is not what they have learnt from Mazzini. If the King wanted Sicily why did he not come and liberate it himself? It pours with rain and you are soaked to the skin and your rusty rifle gets still rustier. At last you see the enemy. The mountain opposite is swarming with little ant-like figures. The clash is coming. If you survive, it will be good, years hence, to read what you are scribbling in your pocket-diary. The bullets start whining overhead. The order comes to charge downhill into the ranks of the Neapolitans as they advance in open order. Then the difficult ascent of the opposite hill, terrace by terrace, sweating and panting, while the enemy pours down a rain of bullets and rocks from above. The hillside is covered with dead and dying. Bixio is everywhere, impossibly mounted on a horse. The terrific final struggle on the hilltop. The dazed numb feeling when the fight is won.

So the Diary continues chronicling the heat, the cold, the night marches, the bewilderment of the common soldier, who rarely knows why or where or how, the charge through the Termini Gate into the heart of Palermo and eventually the fight before Capua. It is an individual, not a historical view of events.

To understand Abba's point of view, political and literary, we have to go back to his school-days in the small Piedmontese township of Cárcare and see him as a quiet little boy drinking in the words of a very remarkable master, Father Athanasius Canata of the teaching order founded by San Giuseppe Calasanzio. In his teaching, Father Athanasius combined deep religious conviction with an ardent love for the cause of emergent Italy. The fact that he made his pupils learn by heart the patriotic odes of Manzoni and read aloud Colletta's history of the recent events in Naples and at the same time instilled in them a love of Christian virtues and a feeling for the poetic nature of the pastoral scene of Biblical Galilee (which with Abba persisted in spite of his later Mazzinian anticlericalism), illustrates that he was a worthy exponent of the Italian romantic movement. No less than four of his pupils were with Garibaldi in 1860. The seed certainly fell on fruitful ground in Abba's case, for he was a romantic by nature. He was a very modest young man of comparatively humble birth and few pretensions. He regarded those above him—social superiors, schoolmasters, officers, the strong, the brave, and the handsome—with unassuming admiration, but it was only in Garibaldi that he found a supreme hero worthy of all his aspirations.

It is a feature of Abba's romanticism that he is constantly feeding on past memories; of childhood and home, of school-days, of the experiences of his brief period under arms in 1859. Physically tough and courageous, as irregular warfare proved him to be, yet he is as sensitive as a girl. With feminine sympathy he is always imagining what others must be thinking, feeling, or suffering. Sometimes this tendency becomes morbid as when he identifies himself with Tuköry's corpse in its coffin.

Abba's literary background may be deduced from the pages of this book. Apart from the stock Latin classics known to all young Italians, the authors whose influence we can most plainly recognize are Dante, Byron, Foscolo, and Manzoni, together with the Bible. A patriotic, romantic, sentimental, heroic mixture!

Byron, the true romantic prototype of the heroic adventurer, is with him from the moment he lifts his eyes to the Genoese villa from which the poet set out for Greece on an earlier liberating mission. A youth is seen at the bows of the *Lombardo* burning tarry tow as a signal flare and Abba compares him to Byron's Corsair. Bixio, in his impetuous rages, is Byronic, 'Lara, a real Lara'; Garibaldi is compared to Conrad, the hero of *The Corsair*. On a difficult night march Abba is stirred to the depths as a companion recites aloud the verses of Foscolo's *Sepolcri*, '*cibo leonino*', he says, food for lions. Thus the literary Abba in his more heroic mood; the softer, more sentimental side of his nature is in tune with what he has read in the Bible, in Manzoni and (one guesses, only because it had been translated into Italian by Foscolo), in Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. It is Abba's extreme sensibility which sometimes topples him over into sentimentality and this is invariably so whenever he sees a young girl's eyes looking at him from a nun's hood. The fine-drawn flirtatious scenes between nuns and soldiers are pure Sterne.

I Promessi Sposi is a more natural text for such a one as Abba, and we are not surprised to find that it is the sack of the Milanese bakeries which comes immediately to his mind when he stands guard over a bread-shop of Palermo; nor that, caught up in crowds, he remembers Manzoni's great crowd descriptions, nor that he quotes the famous chorus from the *Carmagnola*.

Men sleeping in the open, moving over great plains, climbing mountain paths, consorting with a pastoral people with their sheep and goats, watering at their wells, resting under their olive trees, are living the life described in the Bible. Time after time, Biblical images come naturally into Abba's descriptions; he drinks from a young girl's earthen pot and thinks of Rebecca; the troops are piloted through the night by fires and he refers to the column of fire that guided the Israelites through the desert; the name Gibilrossa reminds him of Gilboa and he wishes he had a Bible in his knapsack so that he could read of David and his curse on those mountains. Perhaps

the most typical—because the most romantic—of the many Biblical allusions in this book is the following description of the waters of the Messina straits that separated the invaders from the mainland: ‘At this noon-day hour the sea has an air of infinite benevolence, perhaps enjoying the sun that penetrates its very depths. I almost dare say that one could walk over it, dry-shod. Gazing at it, I am overcome by the exquisite sweetness of things learnt long ago in childhood, about the skies, the lakes, and the good people of the land of Galilee.’

Possibly enough has been said to give some idea of the kind of literary influences which made Abba the author he was. It is the kind of background that could—and probably would—have produced a very commonplace sentimental book, had the author relied only on literature and remained to write at his desk in a remote Piedmontese village. But it was not so, for he was plunged into most vigorous action and his, possibly undue, intellectualism suffered a most salutary shock treatment. Moved by a very fine spirit of idealistic patriotism, Abba had volunteered in 1859 as a private in the Aosta cavalry. He saw no action in that short-lived campaign, and immediately left for Genoa when he heard that Garibaldi was preparing an expedition for the liberation of the South.

What did Sicily mean to a young northerner in 1860 and what did he think about it when he got there? First of all—something unknown, strange, and mysterious! ‘*A nominarla, sento un mondo nell’antichità*’—a world lost in the mists of antiquity. Its very name evokes an image of classical myth and he thinks of the Greeks, of stories read in Plutarch, of school lessons about the Normans, of childhood memories of certain enormous almonds which came from a distant land, far, far away, from Sicily. ‘And what is Sicily?’ the child asked. ‘A land burning in the midst of the sea.’ If the distant prospect of Sicily was strange, the experience was stranger still. The world, physical and social, so well mirrored in *Il Gattopardo* was something undreamed of by a young man from Piedmont. The vast bare deserts—without vines or olives, just an occasional patch of beans, then nothing. The sun strikes fiercely

down on an endless undulating plain of parched grass; no drop of water, no sign of habitation—‘We might as well be in the Pampas,’ said one of the volunteers who had been in South America. Abba heard an officer say: ‘You would think we had come to Sicily to liberate their land from sloth.’

Then the terrible slum villages; houses piled in squalor one above the other on steep hillsides. As for the people—‘They always answer that they don’t know, they shrug their shoulders, or reply by gestures or grimaces; to understand them is a real feat.’ As individuals Abba couldn’t make head or tail of the Sicilians and their political reactions were equally incomprehensible. One village they enter is full of barred windows and scowling faces, the next welcomes them with a brass band and wine. Abba is completely mystified. ‘The inhabitants of Misilmeri who greeted us with illuminations when we were only a small company now show us the cold shoulder. But what have we done? They don’t say and we can’t guess. They chat and smile gaily but they signal behind our backs with hardly perceptible signs. They seem to have several personalities in the same body. Yet how civilized they are!’ (*‘Certe gentilezze s’hanno nel sangue’*.)

The underlying fact of Sicilian life then, and as Danilo Dolci describes it now, was the devastating poverty. Listen to Abba’s conversation with a liberal Carmelite friar in the village of Parco.

‘... I have spoken with many of your comrades and the only thing they could say to me was that you wish to unite Italy.’

‘Certainly we do, to make one great people.’

‘You mean one territory; as far as the people are concerned, one or many, they are bound to suffer and they go on suffering and I have not heard that you want to make them happy.’

‘Of course! The people will have liberty and education——’

‘Is that all?’ broke in the friar. ‘Liberty is not bread, nor is education. Perhaps these things suffice for you Piedmontese but not for us here.’

‘Well. What do you want then?’

'War! We want war, not war against the Bourbons only but against all oppressors, great and small, who are not only to be found at Court but in every city, every hamlet.'

'Well, then, war also against you friars, for wherever I go I see you have convents and properties, houses and fields.'

'Yes, indeed. Also against us, first of all against us. But with the Bible in your hand and the cross before you—then I should join you; your aims now are too limited. . . .'

We may imagine that hearing ideas so much more complicated than the simple concept of a 'United Italy', seeing a way of life so different, and meeting people so strange to them, made a deep impression on the young northerners who formed the great majority of the Thousand. Abba's descriptions of Sicilian scenes, Sicilian types, Sicilian strangeness, are a memorable part of his book. The eternal Italian problem of North and South is forced on the reader more vividly than in the history books.

An equally striking feature of the *Noterelle* is the character drawing of individuals. Garibaldi and what he meant to his followers and the impression he made on the Sicilians has nowhere been better described. Reading historical accounts we understand the distrust and reserve of the politicians towards Garibaldi, reading the *Noterelle* we understand the enthusiasm he invariably evoked in simple people. We first catch a glimpse of him as he strides down to the sea from the Villa Spinola at Genoa. Abba sees him again at Talamone, that halt on the Tuscan shore when the whole fate of the expedition was in jeopardy, calm and quiet with a smile on his face: '*lento e sorridente*.' After the landing at Marsala, the troops start off inland, a little band of amateurs to confront a regular army. It was then, if ever, that the cheering presence of an apparently confident leader was necessary. 'Finally came Garibaldi with his General Staff, smiling and confident (*sorridente e colla buona novella in fronte*) he rode by on a bay horse fit for a Vizier with magnificent saddle and decorated stirrups. He wore a red shirt and grey trousers, with a Hungarian-style hat on his head and a silk handkerchief round his neck. . . . We gave him a

great shout of affectionate greeting. He looked at us with a paternal air as he pressed on to the head of the column. Then the trumpets sounded and we set off again on the march.'

Garibaldi's great gift was to appear both splendid and modest. The man, mounted like a Pasha on the march, was to be seen at the first halt sitting under an olive tree eating bread and cheese with his own clasp knife. '*Io lo guardo*', says Abba, '*ed ho il senso della grandezza antica.*' It was a natural primitive simplicity that endeared him to his men. On one occasion he was seen by Abba instructing a sentry how to tell the time by the position of certain stars '*con la semplicità d'un re pastore*'—like a shepherd king.

The Sicilians with their propensity for hagiolatry seemed to adopt Garibaldi into their family of Saints. The peasant women took his name as Sinibaldo, the father of Santa Rosalia, and knelt to him in the streets holding out their infants for him to touch. Who knows what mystic confusion was in their minds as they saw this gently smiling, blond-bearded figure pass through their streets. The Sicilian beatification and Abba's own hero-worship is nowhere better fused and concentrated than in the description of Garibaldi as a *Gesù guerriero*. It was indeed as a Warrior-Christ that he appeared to simple men. On their way to the firing line at Calatafimi the troops look up and see their leader above them silhouetted against the sky like a Saint in glory: '*Garibaldi ad una svolta della via, veduto dal basso, grandeggiava sul suo cavallo nel cielo; in un cielo di gloria da cui pioveva una luce calda; che insieme al profumo della vallata ci inebriava.*' When Garibaldi speaks to the people from the balcony of Palazzo Pretorio in Palermo the enthusiasm knows no bounds: '*l'anima di quel popolo pareva tutta trasfusa in lui.*'

The devotion inspired by Garibaldi is strange, perhaps, in its excesses, but understandable. No one, however, could take Nino Bixio for a Saint. He it was who put the ramrod of discipline into the motley volunteer troops. As commander of the steamer *Lombardo* he strides up and down the bridge, bare to the waist, glaring at the men under his command like a tiger.

A corporal mumbles some sullen words and Bixio in a flash smashes a plate in his face. 'Listen to me all of you,' he shouts, 'I'm thirty-seven years old; I'm young, I've been round the world, I've been shipwrecked, I've been a prisoner; but here I am and here I command. Here I'm everything, Czar, Sultan, Pope, I'm Nino Bixio. You've all got to obey me, woe to the man who dares shrug his shoulders, woe to the man who thinks he can mutiny. I shall come down in my uniform, with my sabre, with my medals and I'll kill the lot of you. The General has ordered me to land you in Sicily and get you to Sicily I shall. Once there you can string me up on the first tree, but I give you my word, we *shall* land in Sicily.'

Once on land the sea-captain becomes *condottiere* and is constantly seen spurring by on a fiery horse and Abba compares him to Giovanni dei Medici (Giovanni delle Bande Nere). Abba later wrote a biography of Bixio and there too he compares him to the sixteenth-century captain, and d'Annunzio borrowed the comparison:

Il grifagno

Bixio, il risorto Giovanni delle Bande
Nere, temprato animato metallo. . . .

Bixio is always typically himself, typically violent whether he stands guard over a well to stop the parched soldiers from drinking to their hurt; whether, with sabre raised, he spurs his horse against a peasant who is robbing the dead; whether he is blowing out his horse's brains to stop him neighing on a night march and thus revealing their position to the enemy. In battle he is always where the *mêlée* is fiercest. He treats the men under him with an unbelievable harshness and though they say he is insufferable they will serve under no one else. His brigade becomes the best, the most disciplined, and the bravest of the patriot army.

In little scenes interspersed in his main narrative Abba gives us the authentic characters of many of the Thousand, both captains and men. He is a master of the vignette. He has also given us unforgettable scenes of action. His vision of the crisis

of the fight at Calatafimi remains in the reader's mind, as it remained in his mind, like an unforgettable piece of sculpture. 'The supreme clash came when the Valparaiso banner, which had passed from hand to hand and finally to Schiaffino, was seen wavering for some instants in a furious bloody tussle and then go down. But Giovanni Maria Damiani of the Scouts snatched it up by one of its streamers. He and his rearing horse formed a group such as Michelangelo might have carved in stone against a confused tumult of fighting men, friend and foe.'

Take another scene, less importantly dramatic but no less real. When one thinks of the Red-shirts one does not immediately consider how unsuitably they were dressed for meeting the bulls which roamed the Sicilian plains. It is, however, just as unpleasant to be killed by a bull as by a Bourbon. 'Cattle grazing in meadows along our way snuffed the air and gazed, startled, at our endless column of red-clad soldiers. A couple of our men who had fallen out of the ranks, perhaps in search of water, were charged by a bull. We saw them rushing up the slope of a hill with the infuriated animal's formidable horns right at their backs. One managed to clamber into a tree while the other continued running along a bank where the bull would have got him, had not a mounted herdsman come at full gallop, bending so low that his face was hidden in his horse's mane. He thrust his pole at the bull's flank like a lancer and the animal fled bellowing, kicking up the turf and furiously lashing his tail.'

The *Noterelle*, as the reader soon discovers, is a personal view of war seen through the eyes of a most sympathetic character. It was Abba's goodness and modesty that endeared him to his fellow countrymen. After he had relapsed into the unassuming life of a village school-master, the publication of the *Noterelle* in 1880 brought him fame, which his other literary works—novels, poems, sketches, and school books—never achieved and possibly did not deserve. After the success of the *Noterelle*, Abba became an almost symbolic figure for the next generation of Italians and no commemoration or patriotic

occasion was complete without his always modest presence. In 1910, the jubilee year of the 1860 Expedition, he visited Sicily once more and then, as though his life had come full circle, suddenly died.

In the end what mattered for Abba, as for all who have had similar experiences in any war at any time, was the memory of close comradeship between young men facing danger and death. The feeling is summed up in the following paragraph written after he had rejoined his comrades in Naples after a temporary absence:

‘I have found my brigade once more. Nothing, there is absolutely nothing in the world to compare with the sensation of feeling oneself absorbed into the life of a great body of youth, love, and valour.’

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

A limited number of footnotes have been included at appropriate places, not with any idea of supplying an exhaustive commentary, but merely to clarify passages in the text which might puzzle or impede the English reader.

Those interested in the political and military background of the 1860 Expedition should consult Professor G. M. Trevelyan's works: *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, 1909; *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*, 1911. Both have been reprinted many times since the first editions.

Information about Abba himself may be found in the following: Domenico Bulferetti, *G. C. Abba; Versi e Prose*, Paravia; Luigi Russo, *Da Quarto al Volturmo*; Introduction, Vallecchi, 1925; Gaetano Mariani, *Giuseppe Cesare Abba*; Carlo Marzorata, Milano; this last study contains a useful bibliography of further works on the subject.

The *Dizionario Biografico Degli Italiani* (1960) contains an excellent article on Abba, also by Gaetano Mariani.

May 1860

Parma, 3 May. Night

At last there will be an end to rumours! We have heard so many and some that even sounded like accusations. All Sicily in armed revolt! Piedmont incapable of action! What will Garibaldi do? Thirty thousand insurgents surrounding Palermo, only waiting for a leader! Garibaldi! But wherever is he? Some say he is shut away on the island of Caprera, others that he is in Genoa. If that's so, what hinders him? 'Ah,' say some, 'he is sore about the cession of Nice to France.'¹ The more charitably minded think he'll go all the same, even though heart-broken; he won't fail Sicily.

It is the more generous who have guessed aright. Garibaldi is going and I am to be one of the fortunate few who will go with him.

I have just been discussing this business with Petitbon, the lawyer. He it was who last year in the barracks of the Aosta cavalry regiment agreed with us in wanting revolution in the Papal States or the Kingdom of Naples, seeing that the armistice of Villafranca had cut short the war in Lombardy. Now the poor man can't join us as his mother is ill. We parted with a promise to meet the next day and he went slowly down Via dei Genovesi, looking miserable. While I stood watching him, I could hear from afar the sound of axes and hammers ringing through the night. I hear them still as I write. The citizens will not complain at the disturbance, for there is need for urgent haste. They have to work day and night to put up flagpoles, erect stands, and make triumphal arches for the coming of King Victor. So now this King will come acclaimed, among

¹ Garibaldi was born at Nice when it was part of the Piedmontese State. The town was included in the territory ceded to France in compensation for her help in the 1859 war against Austria. Garibaldi naturally resented this.

the people who, six years ago, witnessed the assassination of their Duke Charles III, stabbed in the street. I was a fourteen-year old schoolboy at the time and I remember the account of this horrible affair given us by our master, a Scolopian.² Rare friar that he was, he blamed the assassin, but did not praise the victim. I wonder whether Charles III was the Duke who served in Piedmont, as a cavalry officer, before '48? If so he had a poor reputation. I was told that in Turin one night two waggish fellow officers of noble birth, friends of his, as a joke, accosted him as he was on his way to visit a lady friend. It appears he was so terrified that they had to reveal their identity to prevent him dying of fright. He then threatened them with dire penalties if ever they set foot in his Duchy. 'If we ever have occasion to pass that way,' said one of them, 'we'll spur our horses and jump clear over your Duchy without touching it.'

Poor Duke! Now King Victor takes possession of your Duchy. The latter certainly is fortunate! Anyone who wishes to do something for Italy, even if no friend to kings must be prepared to add to his glory. Parma will give him an enthusiastic welcome; but we shall be on our way.

Parma, 4 May. At the station

I've counted them! Seventeen in all, mostly students, a few workmen, three doctors. Of the latter, Soncini is pretty old, he saw service at the time of the Roman Republic of '49. They say that in the Romagna train we shall find plenty of comrades, first-rate people. They will be pouring in from all sides. There is a great mystification about our departure. To hear some talk, not even the air must know about it. They have given us a serious security talk, although everybody knows Garibaldi is at Genoa and that he's going to Sicily. Passing through the city of Parma, people came up and shook our hands and heartily wished us well.

² This is the first of many references to Abba's school-master Father Canata (v. Introduction p. xi).

4 May. In the train

Some unexplained mishap has brought our train to a halt. We are near Montebello where the battle was. What smiling hills, what a profusion of villas on the green slopes! I look carefully at the whole extent of this landscape and yet there is no vestige of what happened here barely a year ago. The sun is setting. At the end of the long furrows a peasant is talking to his yoked oxen. On they go, dragging the plough after them. Perhaps he saw the fighting and knows where the main clash occurred. I can call up a vision of horses, riders, lances, sabres drawn from three hundred scabbards, and a shrill trumpet call, just as was described by that poor cavalry corporal of the Novara regiment, who returned from the front only two days after the battle. We all pressed round him as he stood there in the barracks with his sabre on his arm, his cloak slung round him, his uniform torn and dirty, looking proud but not at all arrogant.

‘Well, what of the Novara cavalry?’

‘Our lovely regiment is no more. We’ve been cut to pieces!’

He then told us of Morelli di Popolo, colonel of the Monteferrato cavalry, dead; of Scassi, dead; of Gerone, dead; and of so many others; a long mournful tale.

‘And the French?’

‘Courageous people,’ he replied, ‘but you should have heard how their officers spoke of us Italians.’

He spoke out so well, I could have embraced him. A poor fellow from the provinces who had fought in the Crimean war and had been called up for this one. At home he had wife, children, and poverty. He had no fondness for the volunteers; his view was that if they had stopped at home in Lombardy, he would not have had to risk his skin once more, father of a family as he was and thirty years old. He made no pretence of understanding things; what was good for his superiors was good for him, God save the King and *pazienza*. I only wish we could have two or three hundred men like him when we reach Sicily, good horsemen and good fighters!

In the railway station of Novi

You can recognize them by their looks. They are not everyday travellers. They look gay, but at the same time thoughtful. One understands; they have all left someone they love and many regret they have had to leave by stealth.

Well, our party is growing larger and better. On the platform there are some infantry soldiers waiting for a train. A second-lieutenant comes over to me and says: 'Would you send me a wire from Genoa telling me when you are to sail?' I hesitated and didn't answer. What was I to say after our security warning? The officer looked me in the eyes and understood. 'Ah well,' he said smiling, 'keep your secret, but believe me I have no bad intentions in asking.' After he had moved away I wanted to call him back, as I was somewhat mortified by his gentle air of reproof. A fine young man, hardly out of a military college I should think, by his accent a Piedmontese. I don't know his name and I shan't ask it. Nevertheless, I shall the better cherish his memory.

Genoa, 5 May. Morning

I have seen Genoa again for the first time since I was left there on my own five years ago. I shall always remember the panic that seized me as night fell. When I saw the street lamps being lit my heart broke. I stopped a man who was hurrying past and asked him if one could reach Cairo di Montenotte, my home, before dawn if one galloped all night on a good horse. He told me angrily that it was out of the question. That night was long and painful. And now how can I sleep peacefully, far from my people and on such an adventure?

Last night we arrived late and it was impossible to get into any hotel, all crowded with young men who had come into the city. By pure chance under the dark porticos of Sottoripa we were approached by a young man who, guessing who we were, led us without more ado to the hotel where we now are. The principal room was packed with people, eating, drinking, and chattering in all the dialects of Italy. One could recognize,

however, that most of the young men were Lombards. Some of them were dressed quite elegantly, others in original fashions of their own, and some very oddly indeed. Daring resolute faces; sturdy bodies made for the fatigues of war; or slender youths who will perhaps break down on their first march. That's what I saw at a glance. In we went and I soon learnt that the young man who had guided us was called Cariolati, born at Vicenza, but an exile from home for ten years; he had fought at Rome in '49 and in Lombardy last year. Most of the others seemed to me to be experienced men.

Later

The first thing I did this morning was to call on C. to whom I will introduce the Parma doctors whom, as a medical student, he will be glad to meet. If only he could come with us!

'You're going to Sicily?' he exclaimed directly he saw me.

'Thank you for the compliment, you couldn't have said better.'

'Well, you are lucky,' he added, thoughtfully.

After we had had a good talk he took charge of the letter I had written to my parents. He will deliver it only when he knows we have landed in Sicily. If things go amiss I do not want the family to know how I died. They will await my return and as they grow old they will never abandon hope of seeing me again.

I have just run into Signor Senatore who knew me as a boy. He informed me that a band of factious persons had assembled in Genoa with the intention of setting sail one of these days to wage war against His Majesty the King of Naples. 'One simply doesn't know what the world is coming to!' he exclaimed, 'and if the government here doesn't lay hands on these insolent ne'er-do-wells—well, well, there is still hope.' He gave vent to his rage in this way. All of a sudden he stopped short and asked me if, by any chance, I was one of them. I made no reply, so he knew he had guessed right and began to express his amazement and then proceeded to exhortations. However was it possible? Had the world gone so topsy-turvy that a well brought up young man from a remote valley,

educated by friars, the son of peaceable folk, adored by his mother. . . . ? Then he went on to threaten. He would write, he would get help from people from my village who might be in Genoa, he would confront me as I embarked and hold me back. . . . All this time I said nothing. As a last attempt, almost weeping, with hands clasped, he came out with: 'But whatever has the King of Naples done to you, who don't know him, that you must go to war with him? Brigands, that's what you are!' He doesn't know that one of his own sons is coming with us!

* * *

Four of us dined together. We were rather thoughtful as we sat at table, each with his own thoughts far away. We weren't exactly sad, but we were hardly gay. All of a sudden Dr. Bandini sitting opposite me sprang up with his eyes fixed on the wall above my head. There was a portrait there. Pisacane.³ I read aloud the verses of the poem *The Girl Gleaner of Sapri* printed beneath. Dr. Bandini chimed in with his powerful voice as I read the refrain:

They were three hundred, young and strong,
And now they're dead, all dead!

We fell silent once more. I thought of the gloom that fell on the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies after the Sapri massacre. How any further revolt must have seemed hopeless to those poor people! The exiles faced the prospect of death far from home and the whole kingdom was a prison.

Quarto, near Villa Spinola. One a.m. 5 May

Well, here we go! We leave this evening. What a strange coincidence of dates. I wonder how many of us realize that today is the anniversary of the death of Napoleon?

³ Carlo Pisacane with a small band of patriots attempted to start an insurrection after landing in Southern Italy in June 1857. The attempt failed and Pisacane and many others were killed at Sapri. Luigi Mercantini wrote a well-known poem on the subject *La Spigolatrice di Sapri* of which Abba quotes the refrain. Pisacane was considered their precursor by the Thousand. See pp. 8, 90.

At sea. On board the steamship Lombardo.

The morning of 6 May

We're sailing in convoy with the *Piemonte*. Those on board that ship are luckier than we, for they are with Garibaldi. So two ships with the names of two free provinces, Piedmont and Lombardy, are sailing to bring liberty to two slave provinces.

We are a large company on the *Lombardo*; if there are as many on the *Piemonte*, we must be nearly a thousand. I wonder what each of us as individuals thinks about our expedition and about Sicily. To me the very name Sicily suggests an antique land. That story of how the Syracusans liberated the prisoners captured from the army of Nicias, simply on hearing them chant Greek choruses, has always struck me as one of the most civilized actions ever recorded. What the island is like today I simply don't know. I imagine it down there in the south, solitary and profoundly mysterious. And Trapani? I shall never forget, and I well remember at this moment, the words of that Crimean veteran: 'We anchored off Trapani and saw it huddled on a squalid spit of land, a city brimming over with wretched poverty. Some poor ragged people came out in boats to sell fruit, rowing round our ship and staring up in astonishment.

' "What are you?" they called out.

' "Piedmontese."

' "Where are you bound?"

' "To Crimea, to the war."

' "To the war in Crimea!" they repeated, casting down their eyes in sign of compassion as they rowed away.'

Shall we really see Palermo? Shall we see the Square where Fra' Romualdo and Suor Gertrude were burnt alive by the Inquisitors? Father Canata read us the account of it out of Colletta's History when I was at school. As he read it he seemed to be dealing out blows to populace and Grandees alike, those who banqueted as they watched the scene.

Another pleasanter memory! My father told us that in 1811, a year of famine, our people were fed on enormous

almonds, as big as your thumb, that had come from far, far away . . . from Sicily. 'And what is Sicily?' we children asked, and his answer was: 'A land burning in the midst of the sea.'

In 1857, the year of Orsini, Agesilao, and Pisacane,⁴ I read chalked up on the columns of Via Po in Turin 'Sicily has revolted. To arms, brothers!' Who knows who wrote those words? If a Sicilian exile, how happy he will be now if he is one of our number!

* * *

At the critical moment Genoa was admirable. No noisy demonstrations; an absorbed silence and complete accord. At the Pila gate there were simple women of the people who wept as we passed. At the foot of the hill of Albaro I looked up to see the villa again where Byron passed his last days before leaving for Greece, and Childe Harold's invocation to Rome came to my mind. If he were alive today he would be there on board the *Piemonte* to inspire Garibaldi.

'Is this the village of Quarto?' 'Yes.' 'And Villa Spinola?' 'Farther on.'

On I went and all of a sudden there was the villa.

Beyond a high railing there was a small building glimmering white through a dark plantation. I could see the figures of men moving busily to and fro along the paths. In front, on the road above the sea, there was a great whispering crowd and a surge of emotion filled my heart. The crowd swayed. 'There he is!' No, not yet! Instead of Garibaldi someone else came out and disappeared down the road towards Genoa. Towards ten o'clock the crowd made way in great excitement and there was a hush. It was he. He crossed the road and, through a gap in the wall opposite the railings, followed by only a few com-

⁴ Felice Orsini attempted to assassinate Napoleon III (actually in January 1858); Agesilao Milano, a Calabrian soldier attempted to stab Ferdinand II of Naples during a review of troops (actually in December 1856). Pisacane's invasion was of June 1857. Abba's point is that all these indications of unrest happened within a short period.

panions, he went swinging down the cliff. Then everyone started saying 'good-bye', and I, who had no one to bid me farewell, had tears in my eyes. As I took the path down to the sea I ran into Dapino, my school-fellow of six years ago. He had a rifle on his shoulder. I was just going to greet him when I saw his father and brother were with him, and I felt I couldn't. I was afraid of intruding on a painful scene, for I thought the father, whom I knew to be deeply attached to his son, might have come to hold him back. The boats were just below and a silent crowd were coming down like ghosts. I was quite wrong, here are the father and brother embracing my friend and . . . oh well, I feel a gulp in my throat!

Nearby I hear some young men talking about a youth I don't know. They are Venetians, good-looking and polite.

'Do you know that Luzzatto's mother has come to look for him?'

'From Udine?'

'Either from there or from Milan, I really don't know. She has run all over the place from Genoa to Foce, from Foce to Quarto inquiring, imploring, until finally she found him!'

'And he?'

'He begged her not to tell him to go back, because he would go just the same and with the remorse of having disobeyed her.'

'And the mother?'

'She left by herself.'

* * *

Now we are out of sight of land. The boat in which I happened to embark last night was so overladen that it rocked. In order to keep it from capsizing the boatmen told us to keep our eyes on certain green and red lights shining through the night from Genoa. About eleven o'clock, from a boat already out in the open sea we heard a beautiful clear voice hailing: 'La Masa.' Then another voice in reply: 'General.' Then we heard no more.

Meanwhile time passed and, rocked by the motion of the

waters, I fell asleep. I was roused at dawn and saw two stately ships lying before us. All the boats were rowing towards them. I looked back; Genoa and the coast could be seen indistinctly in a misty haze, but beyond, my native mountains reared up proudly in lofty purity, dominating the scene. A little breeze ruffled the surface of the sea. On board the ships there was a great deal of shouting, repeated hailing, remonstrances, and curses that seemed to fly through the air like arrows. There was half an hour of turmoil, all trying to be the first to scramble on board. At last I managed to seize a rope and climb up. I still have before my eyes the picture of a young man flinging himself about convulsively in the bottom of one of the boats, scarcely restrained by three others. Had he thought better of it? Or had sea-sickness reduced him to such a state?

* * *

One hears all the various dialects of north Italy, but it seems that the Genoese and Milanese predominate. By their looks, manners, and speech the greater number seem to be cultivated people. Some of them are wearing uniform. On the whole bright faces, dark or fair hair, youth and vigour. There are a few grey-haired and five or six as bald as coots. This morning I noticed some disabled; certainly old patriots who have taken part in all the revolutionary movements of the last thirty years.

'So you're here too!' someone exclaimed as he embraced a friend: 'Weren't you in Paris?'

'I got here last night.'

'Just in time to come with us then.'

'And would you have considered going without me?'

It sounded like inappropriate boasting, but the elegant young man had such a straightforward, assured air. I never ask who anyone is and then I regret it. The only one I know of the newcomers is Airenta. As I write he is stretched out at my feet asleep with his head on his knapsack. He is pure gold. We struck up a friendship yesterday ashore, we are both in the same ship and we've promised to stick together. When his

tutors at the Archiepiscopal Seminary of Genoa learn the step he has taken!

Hullo! Man overboard!

* * *

A quarter of an hour of great anxiety. 'Reverse engines!' yelled the captain and the vessel came to a stop, puffing. The man, however, was already far behind. Now we could see him, now not, and he seemed to be struggling. A boat was quickly launched. We all urged it on with eyes, gestures, and prayers. The man was over-hauled, seized, and saved. They say he is a Genoese.

* * *

I had the idea that this captain of the *Lombardo* must be a Frenchman. His bearing, behaviour, and tone of command prove him a man worth ten. He stands up there on the bridge, stripped to the waist, bare-headed, irascible, just as though he were at the enemy already. His eye blazes as he takes everything in. It's plain he could do anything single-handed. If he were alone on the ship in the midst of the ocean, he would contrive to escape from such a predicament. He has a profile as sharp as a sabre-cut; if he frowns, everyone tries to look as small and inoffensive as possible; full face, none can withstand his glance. Sometimes, however, he has a look of real amiability. What a funny thing it was to give him the name of Nino! Bixio, his surname, suits him excellently. It produces the effect of a flash of lightning.

Night falls. The *Piemonte* is steaming ahead faster than we. This is the hour when at home they are lighting the lamp, my father comes in, supper is set on the table, steaming hot, but they are waiting . . . one member of the family is missing.

At sea. 7 May

We are told to stop talking. The whole ship is silent while a powerful voice reads aloud from a paper in trumpet tones. We

are once more to be called the *Cacciatori delle Alpi* ('Sharpshooters of the Alps') and certain expressions in this Order of the Day strike straight to the heart. No personal ambitions, no selfish greed; Italy above all and a spirit of good will and sacrifice.

I know another Order of the Day that was read, I don't quite remember whether in 1849 at the retreat from Rome or last year when the volunteers passed the Ticino. One recognizes the same spirit. In that too the General said that he offered neither rank nor honour, but toil, peril, battle, and then—the sky for tent, the earth for bed, and God above as witness.

Talamone, 7 May

We could see a village in the distance, a slender, graceful tower soaring to the sky and on it a flag streaming in the wind, an Italian flag. It was a Tuscan village called Talamone on the Maremma coast. When we came in close to shore, a boat approached as fast as oars could row, bearing the commander of this poor little fortress. The good gentleman was half-buried under two enormous epaulettes and he had a cocked hat on his head covered with gold lace.

What a poverty-stricken place! Just charcoal-burners and fishermen. Our landing has quite cheered them up.

'What's the name of that mountain facing us?'

'Monte Argentaro.'

'And those white houses almost in the sea?'

'Porto San Stefano.'

'With a view like this you must lead a very pleasant life here.'

'Ah yes, if we could eat with our eyes!—but it's not so bad, as long as one makes do.'

These were the words of a young charcoal burner and, chatting, he wanted to know who we are and where we're bound. I absolutely hung on his lips, drinking in the sweetness of his Tuscan speech while comparing it to the harshness of my native dialect.

* * *

I saw him as he landed. Slow and smiling he went up the shelving beach. He was dressed in the uniform of a general of the Piedmontese army and his long hair and full beard accorded ill with such clothes. Captain Montanari, who seems to be a close friend, walked beside him jesting and I heard him say: 'Dressed like that you look like a lion in a cage.' Garibaldi smiled.

* * *

I felt I wanted to go into the church. A little, plain, tranquil church just right for prayer and nothing else. I sat down among the benches in order to enjoy the coolness of the place, but a great sadness came over me. Directly I came out I wrote home admitting where I was and in what company and whither bound.

* * *

I plunged into the sea with indescribable pleasure. The water was tepid. Along the whole beach there was a light-hearted throng of bathers and on the dunes whole companies of our men were stretched out on the grass enjoying the coolness. Along the road to Orbetello there was a great coming and going.

But whatever are we doing here? What are we waiting for? We shall sleep ashore tonight and our ships will be at anchor. They say that they were taken from Genoa by stealth. What a blow it would be if a warship appeared to take them off. It would be far better to be on our way. But perhaps the General is waiting for news, or more men, or arms? In fact up to the present we have got no arms! Only a few have carbines that they cherish like brides and always keep slung over their shoulders. They are certain Genoese who are crack shots and they have trained for this moment with faithful devotion. The grey-haired man yonder, not yet old, but no longer young, is a Professor of literature, a friend of Mazzini's, only out of prison last year. He had been condemned for his part in the Genoa affair of 1856. His name is Savi. I have heard that when

the National Society was founded and Garibaldi was one of the first to join, Savi remonstrated with him for identifying himself with a monarchical movement—he, the military head of the Roman republican party. But now for the sake of our country he too is with us. He keeps aloof, modest, and taciturn, although it is obvious that he is much revered and sought after. Even those who don't know who he is salute him respectfully as they pass.

* * *

Four of us have mustered what we could of our book-learning. One said that the Gallic spearmen on their way to attack Rome armed with lances, must have been encamped somewhere here in the plain towards Orbetello when they were taken by surprise by the Romans, who had landed on returning from the island of Sardinia. Here too Marius came ashore secretly after his African exile, with his heart full of a hatred bred from the marshes of Minturno, and embittered by the honours given to Sulla. It was here, towards the end of last century, that the Neapolitan troops of Count Damas had their first sight of the banners of the French republicans. Perhaps posterity will now add that Garibaldi and his men landed here, sailing against Sicily.

Talamone, 8 May

We have been formed into companies, eight in all. I and my friends are in the sixth. Giacinto Carini, a Sicilian of about thirty-six years old, is our company commander. They say that in '48 he was a cavalry colonel who fought to the end and the final collapse of the republic, and that he has lived in France since that time, writing and hoping. We are glad to serve under a Sicilian with such a reputation, and then he is such a fine type of soldier, affable, courteous; when he speaks he wins your devotion. Most of the other officers of our company are Sicilians too, except one who is a Modenese, who knows his job and must be a daring, resolute man.

Bixio, La Masa, Anfossi, Cairolì, and others with names

renowned in Italian history, each have the command of a company. All the officers have some feat of valour on record, several have served in the South American wars, there are three who have each lost an arm. The General's senior Aide-de-camp is the Hungarian, Colonel Türr; Sirtori is Chief of Staff. The son of Daniele Manin is with us and I have heard that there is a poet in our ranks and that he will write the epic of our battles. His name is Ippolito Nievo.⁵

All the Genoese who have rifles, about forty of them, are being formed into a corps of Sharpshooters. If you saw the head of their captain, Antonio Mosto, in a portrait, you would think it was that of an ancient philosopher. He looks austere and behaves austerely, and it seems as though he had performed penance up to today in order to hasten the resurrection of Italy. He is known to be extremely brave, and how could it be otherwise if these young men accept him as leader?

* * *

I've seen the two gentlemen who travelled with me from Parma to Genoa. They're here too! Soldiers in No. 1 company. The name of the younger, a Piedmontese, is Giovanni Pitaluga. He is a regular volcano! When he saw some French soldiers strolling about near the station at Piacenza, he jerked his head back into the carriage and shouted out to ask whether those foreigners were never going to clear out. The elder, Spangaro by name, a Venetian of some importance to judge by the respect shown to him here, announced very sensibly that we shall be lucky if we can get rid of them peaceably. The other fretted and fumed. Now they will have ample time to continue their argument as to the efficacy of the forcible methods the younger would like to adopt in order to finish once and for all with the enemies of Italy. There is something

⁵ This is the first mention of Ippolito Nievo (but see pp. 47 and 87) to whom Abba looks up with admiration as already known in the literary world. Abba himself went to war with literary ambitions and a lesser man might have shown some jealous feeling in speaking of Nievo.

of a Saint-Just in his looks. I should be sorry for the unfortunate priest or friar who fell into his clutches.

* * *

Poor Sartori was sitting on the very edge of the cliff with a sheer drop to the sea below. He was muttering to himself, but stopped when he heard my footsteps. I asked him what was the matter. He told me he was on the point of throwing himself over as he had been grossly insulted by a captain who had ordered him to take off the officer's kepi that he had previously worn in the army of Emilia. There must have been a furious argument about it. Sartori obeyed, but he has sworn to vindicate himself.

* * *

One of our chaps, bursting with merriment, rides up the slope, bareback on a little donkey, while his friends roar with laughter. The poor beast falls and the young man tumbles off and hurts himself. He is put to bed in the inn and who knows for how long? Poor fellow, if we go off without him!

* * *

A group of our people are going to be detached from the main body. They are going to cross the border of the Roman State under the leadership of Zambianchi,⁶ a bloodthirsty anti-clerical. I'm so sorry for the three Parma doctors who have to follow him. Different destinies, although the goal is the same. We never said farewell.

I heard that some, I don't know how many, have left us, or are going to do so, as they are no longer prepared to follow Garibaldi because he has associated the name of King Victor Emmanuel with our battle cry. The matter is discussed and variously judged, but I have not heard any ill-disposed criticism.

⁶ Zambianchi, see p. 112.

9 May. From the Lombardo off San Stefano

Last evening we embarked, as the sea seemed to be working up for a storm. The inhabitants of Talamone waved to us from the shore, sending us off with compassionate good wishes.

Three *Bersaglieri* who deserted from Orbetello are on board the *Lombardo*. There was already one with us from Genoa, Pilade Tagliapietre of Treviso. Whatever would Lamarmora have said (the man who created this regiment and led them, always victoriously, from Goito to the Crimea) if it had been predicted that one day four young men in his uniform would be gazing from the deck of a ship towards Sicily in revolt? What a swelling of his heart he would have felt and what words would he have stammered out! Oh, that old Sicily of the time of Vittorio Amedeo.⁷

There must be urgent need to depart, for Bixio is shouting to the boatmen who come and go bringing water: 'Twenty francs for every barrel you bring me before eleven o'clock!' They simply make the boats fly!

While we wait for the water, we are served out with arms. My share has been a rusty old gun (what a thing!), a belt like a policeman's, a bayonet, a cartridge pouch and twenty cartridges. But, didn't they tell us at Genoa that we should have brand new carbines? This is not the worst! Colonel Türr went to Orbetello yesterday and came back with three cannon, great long old culverins, things that must date from the time when this strip of coast was known as the *Stato dei Presidii*. What shall we do in Sicily so ill equipped?

Well, the water is all shipped and the anchor weighed. Santo Stefano, good-bye! Once we round that cape we shall be on the open sea again and may God be with us!

⁷ Duke Vittorio Amedeo II of Savoy was created King of Sicily by the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). This is one of the few direct connexions between Piedmont and Sicily and Abba frequently mentions it.

9 May. Evening

Not a sail on the horizon. Once past the islet of Giglio a delicious little breeze got up which did us all good. The sky is absolutely clear. Not a cloud, not even a single one of the mob of sea-birds that at first followed the ship, hovering above, and then diving down like lightning to plunge into the water as though to entertain us. We saw lots of dolphins leaping gaily through the water as they followed in our wake for quite a while.

Soon it will be night. A strong tuneful voice from the poop is singing a song that should be heard by our comrades on the *Piemonte*. It is the flight of a soul to his beloved. Now the single voice gives way to a rousing chorus:

Si vola d'un salto nel mondo di là.

Oh dear, oh dear, what if we were to be captured on the high sea!

10 May

From dawn until now it has been simply wonderful. We sailed triumphantly on and on without anything to disturb us. We had a calm sea and a clear sky all to ourselves. But there was one anxious moment. Someone threw himself overboard and they say it was the same man as before. So on the previous occasion it can have been no accident. As the ship stopped, we could see his head in the distance and we anxiously measured the space between the drowning man and the boat that sped to the rescue. They got him! Once aboard, Bixio cursed him heartily, then he relented and had him put in a cabin where he is under guard. They've stripped him of his soaking clothes and dressed him in an officer's tunic. He's lying down now, glaring around like a maniac.

* * *

The *Piemonte* is several miles ahead. She sails proudly as though she were conscious of her destiny and of the man she

carries. We can just see her as a black dot on the far horizon; now hardly more than her smoke is visible, trailing behind her like the tail of a comet. Oh, if she should run into the Neapolitan squadron! Now we have come into enemy waters orders are stricter. A few have put on red shirts. Bixio rebukes them, calls them Turks and orders them to keep out of sight. No sail on the horizon. We are the only living thing as far as the eye can see.

* * *

Corporal Plona gave vent to some grouse or other and Bixio was on him in a flash and smashed a plate in his face. There was some confusion, but Bixio was up on the bridge like a rocket, shouting at the top of his voice 'All on the after-deck! All on the after-deck!' And there we were packed together, staring up at him as he stood above looking as though he were about to pulverize the lot of us. Then he spoke: 'I'm young, I'm thirty-seven years old, I've been round the world. I've been shipwrecked; I've been a prisoner; but here I am and here I command! Here I'm everything, Czar, Sultan, Pope. I'm Nino Bixio! You've all got to obey me, all of you! Woe to the man who dares to shrug his shoulders, woe to the man who thinks he can mutiny. I shall come out in my uniform, with my sabre, with my medals, and I'll kill the lot of you. Garibaldi has left me with the order to land you in Sicily. I shall do it! Once there, you can string me up on the first tree, but'—and he took us all in with a slow stare—'but we shall, I give you my word, we *shall* land in Sicily.'

'Three cheers for Nino Bixio! Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!'

Hundreds of arms were stretched out towards him, as he stood proudly there for a little. Then he went pale, his eyes flashed, and he turned his back on us. From high up on the rigging the seamen cheered too. Then from our midst a rather feeble voice was heard coming from a man who had got up on a barrel and had started to harangue us, waving his arms about and praising Garibaldi and Bixio to the skies. He was not young nor did he seem robust, but he had a refined gentle

face set off by hair and beard of a wishy-washy blond colour. It remains to be seen, I thought, if Bixio doesn't shoot him down with his pistol! I turned round, really fearing that this would happen, but Bixio had left the bridge. The orator went on a little, but he had to climb down without having made any tangible effect. No one paid any attention to him because they had all been stirred by Bixio's words that had swept over them like wind over the waves. They were all greatly excited and not one of them but would have given his life for Bixio. I inquired the name of the orator with the gentle Christ-like face and they told me it was La Masa.

On board the Lombardo 11 May, morning

After sunset yesterday the sailors up on the yards could still see the *Piemonte* like a distant shadow. A youth at the bows was lighting bundles of tarry tow and throwing them overboard, always in the same direction. Could they be signals? He looked born for high adventure. His face was lit up in the ruddy glow that gave a curious oblique tilt to his countenance, set off by fair curls. As I took note of his well-shaped hands, his broad chest, his fine sturdy neck in its silk scarf falling back over his shoulders, I thought of the seas of the Orient and of Byron's *Corsair*.

I curled up in a corner and, with my mind in a whirl, fell dead asleep.

'Get up! Get up!' exclaimed Airenta, shaking me violently. I didn't know what the time was but up I leapt. All those on deck were crouching down on their knees with faces turned to the left. Only whispers could be heard. Their fixed bayonets glittered.

'Whatever is it?' said I, and Airenta replied, 'A ship is making straight for us at full speed.'

Can it be a Bourbon ship? It has sounded its bell and, at Bixio's order, we make no reply.

The ship was coming straight at us and we could hear the angry threshing of its paddle-wheels. It seemed to spit flame as it advanced. Bixio was staring hard from up on the bridge.

He was certainly contemplating some desperate action, perhaps blowing us up, both us and the ship almost now alongside. I hardly took in what happened next owing to some agitation that broke out near me, I only heard Bixio's great cry of '*Generale!*' Then joy broke out.

It was the *Piemonte*. The General ahead of us had sighted the Bourbon patrol and had turned back to find us. Now we had met, he discussed matters with Bixio and we started off again on a new tack. I believe we're closer to Africa than to Sicily.

* * *

Now we're steering once more for Sicily. At the stern the Lombards among us are singing songs of their native lakes. They are not sad, like the songs of my own mountains; they do not echo the sorrows of generations of men born to suffer under the shadow of those castle keeps, now but inglorious ruins crowning the hills above the valley hamlets. But there is something pathetic about them and they are deeply touching.

Near me is a Hungarian whom I spotted yesterday. He can't say anything in Italian except for a coarse Venetian jest. He looks at me with his little green eyes all puckered up. His hair straggles over a narrow brow and he has the nose of a Hun. He lies stretched out, thoughtful and gloomy, sun-bathing. Perhaps he is thinking of his own country as he goes to die for mine.

* * *

A lovely view of little islands! They seem just risen from the sea. There is green of all shades, there is dazzling cliff, and everything enshrined in an atmosphere of blue. The islands have a silvery fringe at their feet. They tell me that there are dreadful prisons there. The King of Naples keep his political prisoners in that place, and families who have some member there say: 'Better dead!'

* * *

Sicily! Sicily! Down there in the blue distance between sea and sky something misty appears. It is the sacred island! On our left are the Ægades and far ahead is Mount Eryx with its summit in the clouds. A Sicilian who was with me on deck told me about the adventures of Eryx, son of Venus, buried by Hercules on those heights. Delightful people the ancients, but not more so than my friend who can now find it in him to talk of mythology! He told me that there is a village on the mountain called San Giuliano where the most beautiful women in Sicily are to be found.

* * *

How easy it is to recognize the Sicilian exiles among us! There they are, all crowding at the bows. They seem to concentrate their whole being in their eyes. There are about twenty of them, of all ages. It will be a miracle if Colonel Carini gets ashore alive, seeing that his heart is bursting with joy.

* * *

Doctor Marchetti, who always laughs when he sees me writing, has no idea that I am now writing about his son! The boy was in exile with him and now, at his father's wish, is on this expedition. He is perhaps only about twelve years old, yet he has such a bold look. Lucky boy to have such a splendid morning to his life! If death does not catch him, he will be a man risen early for his journey through the world. What's up now? Everybody is looking aft.

* * *

There are two ships in sight astern. A wind has got up behind us. All sails are set and the seamen at work aloft look like birds. Bixio gives his orders and the men are smart about it. He shouted out that any man aloft who blunders will be hanged on the mainmast! We simply fly through the water.

* * *

A small ship came from land. It was flying the English flag. Bixio took a sheet of paper; wrote something on it; cut open a loaf of bread and inserted the paper. Then, when the ship was passing close alongside he threw the loaf, but it fell into the sea. So, making a trumpet of his hands he shouted: 'Tell them at Genoa that General Garibaldi landed at Marsala at one p.m. today.'

Cheers rose from the little vessel; they gesticulated, waved their handkerchiefs, and clapped. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

* * *

There's Marsala! Its walls, its white houses, its green gardens, and the lovely slope on which it lies. In the port, little shipping. There is an English warship at the entrance dressed over all.

'Ready boys,' shouts Bixio, 'neck or nothing!' If he had the strength he would throw us all ashore in one heave! But we are now certain to be able to land, although the two ships pursuing us have gained a good deal. Their funnels send up clouds of smoke as they come on.

Marsala, 11 May

I am sitting on a stone in front of the piled arms of my company in this squalid, solitary, rather frightening little square. Captain Ciaccio of Palermo is weeping like a child from pure happiness. I pretend not to see him. The company is dispersed here and there, half of them in search of something to eat. But at the first note of the bugle they will all be back. There are bursts of cannon-fire from the port, directed at the city. Many of the houses are flying foreign flags, most of them English.⁸ Whatever does this mean?

The *Lombardo* is almost under water. The *Piemonte* still floats in majesty. The frigates that chased us arrived within range when we were nearly all ashore. The earth rocked under our feet so that we could hardly stand upright. The city had not

⁸ There was a considerable British colony in Marsala engaged in the wine trade.

yet woken up to what was happening, but a mob of little urchins had put in an appearance. Some white-robed friars took off their great hats to us; they proffered enormous snuff-boxes, shook us by the hand and inquired if we were returned exiles, immigrants, Swiss?

Some naval officers in white ducks appeared from the city gates and went down to the port in the direction of the English ship, talking among themselves in an excited way. Meanwhile we were getting into some order. All of a sudden there was a cannon shot. What's that? 'Only a salute,' said Colonel Carini, smiling. He was dressed in a red tunic with a great broad-brimmed hat on his head, with a feather stuck in it. A second explosion and, with a roar, a large cannon ball came bouncing between us and the seventh company, throwing up the sand as it went. The street-urchins throw themselves to the ground, the friars bolt—as well as they can with their gross bodies, waddling along in the ditches. A third ball crumples up the roof of the near-by guard-house. A shell falls into the middle of our company and lies smoking ready to explode. Beffagna, the Paduan, rushes to it and draws the fuse. Bravo! But he neither hears nor cares.

Then came salvo after salvo, more than I could count. What fury! But now the city was ours. We ran from the port to the walls under fire from the flank. No one was hurt. The people cheered us in the streets; friars of every order split their throats with shouting; women and girls looked admiringly down from the balconies. 'Beddi! Beddi! Bless you, bless you!' arose from all sides. I drank from the amphora of a young girl of the people who was returning from the well. Rebecca!

And that arch of the gate through which we came into the city, how it comes back to me as I write! It seemed to be the entrance to an Arab town, and at the same time I thought I was at the gate of my own village that has a similar arch. I paused to cast a glance towards the port. The last detachments of our men were running uphill; the two Bourbon ships were wrapped in smoke as their cannonade still flashed forth; our *Lombardo*, which had heeled over, filled me with compassion.

They say that Bixio insisted on sinking it. That man leaves his mark wherever he passes.

* * *

On guard over the ancient port of Marsala. Evening

Those of us on this side can't see what is happening on the other where we landed; the sound of quick-firing certainly comes from the Genoese Sharpshooters. Perhaps the ships are attempting to put landing parties ashore. I only hope they don't continue to do so at night and catch our people still in the city unawares, or worse. There is a certain treacherous wine here and our men have been so long without! But our leaders have thought of everything and almost all companies are now out of the city. Mine is here complete. We have before us a great curve of beach and on the horizon a dark promontory, perhaps Trapani. Those little boats that are putting off over there and taking to the open sea are loaded with fugitives.

Meanwhile the firing from the ships goes on.

Marsala, 12 May, 3 a.m.

Last night at ten o'clock Corporal Plona put me on guard at the foot of a cliff, the last sentinel of our line, and left me here for five hours. I composed verses to the stars. It was my vigil of arms.

Wednesday. During the principal halt of the day

At break of day a man on a horse came and spoke with the captain; we picked up our rifles and re-entered the city. Along a sleepy street, skirting certain hovels where poverty-stricken people were astir in the foul half-open ground-floor rooms, we gained the open country on the other side. There we found all our people lined up ready: there was a feeling of whole-hearted healthy happiness which encouraged one. Far out at sea, the two Neapolitan ships were sailing away, towing the *Piemonte* behind them. A fine consolation for them! The

Lombardo still lay stranded. When the sun got up, part of her keel that was out of the water shone as though on fire, as though indeed to bid us farewell and wish us luck.

There was a delicious scent in the air. Nevertheless that field beyond the walls of Marsala with its blackish boulders strewn here and there, with those yellow flowers in patches, began to give me a kind of feeling of things dead.

Bixio came by on horseback. As haughty as on the bridge of the *Lombardo*, he gave a scowl towards that poor ship, made an abrupt gesture towards her as though to say 'That's that!' and went off at a trot. After him came some of the Scouts who had been in the *Piemonte*; fine horses, fine riders, dressed in the smart uniforms they had worn last year in Lombardy. Nullo came prancing along, sitting loose to his mount. A bizarre figure with a torso like a Perseus and an aquiline face, the handsomest man of the expedition. He might be one of the thirteen champions who jousting at Barletta.⁹ The Milanese Missori is dressed in a short red tunic that adds to his aristocratic appearance, on his head he wears a smart gold-frogged red cap. He is in command of the Scouts. A charming, gentle face, but full of spirit. He and Nullo are like the Trojan friends Eurialus and Nisus. The Scout over there, a simple ranker, with a sulky look on his open face, is the oldest of the contingent. He's about forty. He is Nuvolari from Mantua, a rich countryman who has both conspired and fought, a plain steadfast Cromwellian type. The others are in the flower of their youth; a certain Mancini from Trent has the charm of an innocent girl, he might be Grossi's heroine Fiorina.

A smile on his face, radiating confidence, Garibaldi, with his General Staff, brought up the rear. He rode a bay horse fit for a Vizier. The saddle was magnificent, the stirrups decorated with filigree work. He wore a red shirt and grey trousers,

⁹ This is the first of several references to an historic combat of 1503 when thirteen Italians beat an equal number of French. It was adopted as an encouraging symbol of Italian prowess throughout the *risorgimento* period and was popularized, in particular by D'Azeglio in his novel *Ettore Fieramosca*.

with a Hungarian-style hat on his head and a silk handkerchief round his neck, which he pulled up to shade his face when the sun was high. An affectionate cheer broke out and he looked at us with a paternal air as he pressed on to the head of the column. Then the trumpets sounded and we set off again on the march.

After we had gone a good way along the main road we took to the open country along a difficult little path winding between the vineyards. Our guns followed with difficulty, mounted on carts painted with sacred scenes and drawn by spirited stallions, whose bells tinkled out merrily. We halted at the farmstead where I now write, a white house and a well in an olive grove. How pleasant it is to enjoy a little shade and relish a ration of bread! The General, seated at the foot of an olive tree, eats his bread and cheese, slicing it with his own knife and chatting simply with those around. I look at him and have a feeling of the greatness of bygone days.

Evening. Written from the Fief of Rampagallo

After a good hour's rest we started again, making our way through a vast stretch of open country. No more vineyards or olive gardens, but every now and again a little patch of beans, then no more cultivation. The sun poured down on us like a liquid as we passed through endless undulating wastes, where the grass grows and dies as in a cemetery. And never a spring of water, not even a runnel, never a glimpse of a village on the horizon. 'Why, are we in the Pampas?' exclaimed Pagani, who had been in South America as a youth.

Those solitudes, farther than the eye could reach, were barely relieved at rare intervals by some shepherd's hut or by a herd of horses running free in their wild liberty. Some, on catching sight of us, were startled and galloped far away; some stopped short, prancing gaily. In the afternoon we came on an old shepherd by the side of the track. He was dressed in goat-skins and on his unkempt, almost savage head he wore an enormous woollen hat. His hands rested on the shoulders of a young lad of about fifteen, who was silently staring at us as we

passed. When my company reached the spot where he was standing, he addressed our captain in loud, resolute tones, crying out in patois: 'Oh, Prince Carini, start the revolt in the Capital!' As he spoke he thrust the lad into our ranks. Then he dried his eyes, and turning his back, made off through the desert land. Far, far away on the horizon we could see a hut, perhaps his.

'Is our captain a prince?' I asked Lieutenant Bracco, who comes from Palermo himself. 'No . . . but there is a Prince Carini, a Bourbon supporter, who would like to poison the very air we breathe.'

This great frowning edifice is an ancient fief. We arrived as the sun was setting and we threw ourselves down on a slope, full length on the rank grass. I was dispatched to draw water. Some of our senior officers were standing in a group on a little mound near the building. In passing I heard one of them say: 'Did you take note of that desert today? You might say we've come here to help the Sicilians liberate their country from sloth!'

No word of the enemy.

13 May. Salemi. From a convent balcony, facing the glory of the sun

As reveillé sounded, Bixio appeared, already in the saddle, from goodness knows where. If, instead of an infantry uniform, he wore a sixteenth-century costume he could be the *Condottiere*, Giovanni delle Bande Nere.¹⁰

During the night, bands of Sicilian insurgents arrived, armed with double-barrelled sporting guns and strange pikes. Some wear sheepskins over their clothes. They all seem resolute men and they have cast in their lot with us.

When we left the camp at Rampagallo, we were all benumbed from having slept just as we arrived, without blankets or tents under the heavy dew that falls during these nights. But we threw off the chill very quickly and after half an hour's march

¹⁰ The famous commander Giovanni de Medici (1498-1526). Abba compares him to Bixio elsewhere.

we were already longing for water. We passed close to several springs, but we drank with our eyes only for Bixio was there on guard, inexorable, and wouldn't even let us wet our lips. He was quite right. One of our men, who managed to have a drink, fell half-way up the great climb to this place. I saw him writhing in great pain surrounded by anxious friends. A doctor felt his pulse and shook his head. Let's hope he isn't dead.

That confounded climb nearly burst our lungs, but '*Pazienza!*' On arrival we were welcomed by a crowd of men, women, and shrieking children; we could hardly hear the band playing in our honour.

A woman, with a black cloth lowered over her face, stretched out her hand, muttering something.

'What is it?' I asked.

'I am dying of hunger, Excellency.'

'Are you making fun of us up here?' I exclaimed. Then a man gave the woman a shove and offered me a drink from a great earthen pitcher. I nearly smashed it in his face, but I put my lips to it out of politeness; then I left him and tried to catch up with the woman. I failed to find her. But then a young girl with big gentle eyes, but ill, wasted, offered me a lemon with her right hand, and held out the left saying, 'Young Gentleman!' A rag of a skirt flapped against her shins and her feet were bare. I put a little money into her hand, the small thin local coins like butterflies, and away she fled. I see her yet, running away in satisfaction or shame, with her dirty, ragged, brief garment flapping against her skinny legs.

When the General arrived, there was an outbreak of delirious enthusiasm. A band played madly. All that could be seen were raised arms and brandished rifles. Some swore fealty, some fell on their knees, and some uttered blessings. The square, the streets, the by-ways were thronged. It was only with great difficulty that some room could be made for his passage. Patient and pleased he saluted on all sides and paused, smiling.

There is an officer here dressed in Piedmontese uniform, who seems to be the man I met at Novi. I shall try to get to speak

to him and if it really is the man, I shall ask his pardon for not having told him what he asked me. They say that he is a deserter from the regular army and that his name is De Amicis and that he is from Novara.

* * *

I have taken a turn through the city. They built it up here in such a way that one house is on the top of another and all seem about to collapse at any moment. Even had the Saracens wished to land off Salemi the city would have been safe. Vast, over-crowded, filthy, its streets seem to be drains. One can hardly keep one's feet. One goes in search of an inn and finds a den. But the friars, oh yes, the friars have the most beautiful convents and this one where my company is billeted is absolutely spotless. The friars have made themselves scarce.

The inhabitants are not impolite, but, if we ask them questions they seem embarrassed. They don't know anything. They shrug their shoulders or reply by gestures or grimaces. If one can understand what they mean, one is certainly clever. Weary, I went into a tavern four or five steps below the level of the street. There I found a whole party of my friends who were gaily eating macaròni out of certain wooden vessels that . . . ah well! Despite the filth I set to and ate. And so we drank and chattered and we had almost forgotten what we were here for when Bruzzesi of the Scouts came in and told us that a great body of Neapolitan troops was only a few miles away. All the better, exclaimed Gatti, now we shall see what kind of a welcome they are preparing for us.

Salemi, 14 May

The General has ridden through the city on horseback. When the populace sees him they take fire. There is a magic in his look and in his name. It is only Garibaldi they want.

The General has assumed the dictatorship of Sicily in the name of Italy and Victor Emmanuel. There is a good deal of talk about this and not everyone is satisfied. But such will be our battle-cry. At the street corners one can read the proclamation

issued by the new dictator. He addresses the *buoni preti*, the good priests, of Sicily. A purist among us has said that it would have been better Italian style if he'd written *preti buoni*.

The Sicilian insurgents come in from all sides by the hundred, some on horseback, some on foot. There is a tremendous confusion and they have bands which play terribly badly. I have seen mountaineers armed to the teeth, some with rascally faces and eyes that menace one like the muzzles of pistols. All these people are led by gentlemen whom they obey devotedly.

It's now pelting with rain. We have various contradictory reports about the enemy. They say there are 4,000, no—10,000, with horses and guns. On certain mountains they are digging themselves in! No—somewhere else! They are advancing! They are retiring! Tonight we shall stay here and meanwhile they will finish getting the carts ready to transport our artillery.

* * *

I have heard a pretty tale. The day before yesterday, directly we had landed, some of our men occupied the telegraph office. Before the official had run away, he left a sheet of paper on which was written 'Two Sardinian steamers are dis-embarking men.' It was the copy of a dispatch sent to the military commander of Trapani. And from Trapani came the question, 'How many are there, what do they want?' Then our men answered, 'Excuse me, I have made a mistake, the ships are unloading sulphur.' From Trapani came one dry word 'Imbecile'. Then our people cut the telegraph wire and all was silence.

Salemi, 15 May, 5 a.m.

I have just flung wide the windows of this monkish cell where I am billeted and given a glance at the countryside, still sleepy under the wisps of vapour rising from the valleys below. Who knows what road we are to take and at what point in the vast sweep of country within my sight we shall be confronted by

the Neapolitans? Who knows along what roads they are now marching towards us, or in what ravine they are lying in wait? Margarita and Bozzani are stretched out on a green rug, still asleep. I don't know where they got it from. Raccuglia, the good little old Palermitan who never opens his mouth, is doing up his gaiters by the light of my candle. He's coming back from abroad in our company just as though he were a medieval exile returning to his city. 'Sergeant Raccuglia, what sort of weather shall we have today?' 'You'll know when you see the General's face, but it'll turn out fine because, just look, Gatti is combing his hair! He's always neat and dandified.'

Outside the gate, two Milanese are discussing our situation. One of them is more knowing than the other and argues that things are very serious from all points of view. A numerous enemy provided with everything, we with our poor arms and insufficient ammunition, only fifteen cartridges per man and the Sicilian insurgents worse-armed than we are. 'What's all that,' thundered a great voice from the corridor, 'did you come to Sicily to tot up such accounts?' The two fell silent. A bugle-call sounds. And Simonetta comes to tell us that we are off.

Simonetta is a great young man. He cares nothing for himself, he only lives for others. Is there guard duty to be done? Simonetta volunteers. A difficult job? There he is, slender of build and gentle of mien. Bread is being distributed? He is the last to come forward to collect his own. At Milan he has left a widowed father alone.

* * *

We're off in a few minutes. The enemy is really nine miles away. For two days and nights we have rested on this height with this poor uncivilized population. Who knows where we shall sleep tonight? The carts for the guns are ready. The long muzzle of the culverin protrudes from one of them. An artillery section has been formed. The gunners are almost all engineers.

15 May, 11 a.m. On the hills of Pianto Romano

One last thought for those at home and then we're all ready. Our guns are up above us, on the main road to the left. The enemy is over there; the mountain opposite is swarming with them. They must be about 5,000. Our companies are in echelon. From a point above us the General is observing the enemy movements. Between our positions and theirs is a fairly small barren plain. At the highest point in our centre our banner waves in the breeze. The lieutenant who carries it sent me on a message to the General and the General sent me back to him with the command, 'Tell him to carry it to the highest point and let it be seen waving by all'. Oh God, with what a voice he uttered these words!

Colonel Carini's horse reared and he fell. No damage done. Here he is once more in the saddle. A short time ago I saw La Masa fall off too and I think he hurt himself. I felt as though I had knocked my own head against the stones. The Neapolitan riflemen are coming down from the heights. How calm they seem. What certainty there is in their movements. Before long—— But their trumpets have a lugubrious sound.

16 May. From the Convent of San Vito above Calatafimi

If I survive it will be nice to read, several years hence, what I am now scribbling in my notebook. If only I had time I could have written a hundred pages since yesterday morning.

All Salemi was out to wave us good-bye. 'Bless you! bless you!' they shouted. And when I turned from the foot of the descent to look back at them I stretched out my arms to the city and its inhabitants and I should like to have been able to embrace them all. Our companies came down at a brisk pace, singing. At a bend in the road Garibaldi on his horse loomed grandly up above us against the sky. It was a sky of glory from which a warm light poured down which, blending with the perfumes of the valley, intoxicated us all. Accompanying us down from the mountain came the bands of Sicilian

insurgents. It was a procession which I myself didn't wait to see finish, as my company was sent off through the open country, which became more beautiful as we advanced. When we came to the village of Vita we met some Scouts who were coming back at a half-trot. They had discovered the enemy. We only had to climb the nearby hill and we should have had them before us.

Meanwhile the inhabitants of Vita were fleeing, carrying their household goods with them, dragging their old folk and children behind them. It was a miserable sight. Saddened, we went through the village and those unfortunates looked at us and made gestures of compassion and said to us, 'Poor souls'.

After a little we halted. And then I saw our lovely banner. It was carried at the centre of the 7th Company, formed by some hundred and fifty young men almost all from the University of Pavia, the very flower of Lombardy and Venetia, the most numerous and the best-equipped company of the lot. I could read these words embroidered in large golden characters on one side of the banner, 'To Giuseppe Garibaldi, from the Italian residents in Valparaiso, 1855'. On the other side was Italy as the august figure of a woman with broken chains at her feet, standing over a trophy of cannons and rifles, worked in gold and silver. As I gazed at the banner, I thought that in those distant lands where it was made, among those patriots who had presented it, lives one of my uncles. Meanwhile there was a great running to and fro of officers and Scouts. Then the General appeared, the trumpets sounded, we left the main-road and set off through the fields over a barren hillside, one company treading on the heels of the next. From the top we could see the enemy. The hill before us was flashing with arms. It appeared to be covered by at least 10,000 soldiers.

'What? They are wearing red trousers, the Neapolitans have already got the French to back them up,' exclaimed some indignantly as they saw the red among the hostile ranks. But Sicilians among us who overheard them quietened them,

informing them that the Neapolitan officers also wear red trousers.

We lay down when it was just on eleven o'clock. We seemed to have been watching the Royalist troops for only a matter of minutes, yet the first shot was not fired until 1.30 p.m. The Neapolitan Sharpshooters, who had gradually come down through the rows of prickly-pear bushes were the first to fire. Garibaldi, surrounded by many other officers, including Türr, Tuköry, and Sirtori, had kept them under observation for a long time from the high point where he had taken his station. I believe that at this first encounter he half-hoped . . . in something which, however, the Neapolitans failed to realize. And yet our Italian flag was flying up there in the full light of day!

'Don't fire! Don't reply to their fire!' shouted our commanders; but the bullets passed over us with such a provocative whine that we couldn't restrain ourselves. One shot after another was heard, then the General's own trumpeter sounded the call to arms, then the charge.

We got to our feet, closed up and rushed like a flash down to the plain below. There we came under a perfect hail of bullets, while from the smoke-wreathed mountain two guns began a furious cannonade against us.

The plain was quickly crossed and the first enemy line was broken but when we came to the slopes of the opposite hill it was not pleasant to look upwards. I saw Garibaldi there on foot with his sheathed sword over his right shoulder, walking slowly forward, keeping the whole action in view. Our men were falling all round him and it seemed that those who wore the red shirt were the most numerous victims. Bixio came up at a gallop to offer some shelter with his horse, and he pulled the General behind his animal calling out, 'General! Is this the way you wish to die?' 'And how could I die better than for my country?' replied the General, and, freeing himself from Bixio's restraining hand he went forward with a frown. Bixio followed respectfully.

Goro da Montebenichi and Ferruccio at the battle of Gavi-nana, I thought to myself, and I was pleased that I remem-

bered the episode;¹¹ but the mood quickly passed and I began to fear, and even to guess, that the General thought it impossible that we could win this fight and that he was therefore seeking death on the battlefield.

At that moment one of our guns thundered from the road above. A cry of joy from all greeted the shot because it seemed as though we were getting the aid of a thousand strong arms. 'Forward! Forward! Forward!' was the cry heard on all sides and the trumpet that had continuously sounded the charge now pealed out with a kind of anguish as though it were the voice of our country in danger.

The first, second, and third terraces up the hillside were attacked at the point of the bayonet and passed, but it was terrible to see the dead and wounded. Little by little, as they yielded ground, the Royalist battalions retreated higher up. They concentrated and thus grew stronger. At last it seemed impossible that we could face them. They were all on the top of the hill and we were around the brow, tired, at the end of our tether, and reduced in numbers. There was a moment of pause; it was difficult to recognize the two opposing sides, they up there and we all flat on the ground. One could hear rifle fire and the Royalist troops started rolling down boulders, and hurling stones, and it was said that even Garibaldi was hit by one of these.

Already we had lost a great many of our men and I heard friends bewailing their comrades. Near by, among the prickly-pear bushes, I saw a fine young man fatally wounded, propped up by two of his comrades. He seemed to want to continue to charge, but I heard him ask his two friends to be merciful to the Royalist soldiers because they too were Italians. Tears came into my eyes.

¹¹ Another notable episode of Italian history (*cf.* note 9, p. 26) was the battle of Gavinana (1530) and the heroism of Francesco Ferruccio was known to all nineteenth-century Italians from Guerazzi's novel *L'Assedio di Firenze*. During the battle Goro da Montebenichi tried to shield Ferruccio with his body as Bixio did Garibaldi and with the same result. Abba is constantly seeing life in terms of literature.

The whole hillside was covered with fallen, but I heard no complaints. Quite close to me was Missori, commander of the Scouts, who, with his left eye all bloody and bruised, seemed to be listening to the noises floating down to us from the hill-top. We could hear the heavy tramp of the Royalist battalions up there and thousands of voices like waves of an angry sea, shouting from time to time, 'Long live the King!'

Meanwhile new re-inforcements came up on our side and we felt stronger. Our commanders moved about among us encouraging us. Sirtori and Bixio had come up the whole way on horseback. Sirtori, dressed in black with a little bit of red shirt showing from beneath his lapel, had many rents in his clothes made by bullets, but he was unwounded. Impassive, riding whip in hand, he seemed hardly present in all that confusion. Yet on his pale, thin face I could read something as though he felt a passionate desire to die for us all.

Bixio was to be seen on all sides as though he were one man divided into a hundred; the right hand of Garibaldi. I saw them up there for a moment together. 'Take a rest lads, take another short rest,' said the General, 'one more effort and the job's done.' And Bixio followed him through our ranks.

Lieutenant Bandi stood up to salute him, but he was on the point of falling, at the end of his tether. He could do no more. He had been wounded several times, but the last bullet had struck his left breast and blood was pouring out. He will be dead in another half-hour, I thought, but when the companies charged on a last assault at that hedge of glittering bayonets pointed so menacingly at us, I turned and saw that officer in the leading rank. Someone, who must be a friend of his, called out, 'How many lives have you got?' And he smiled happily.

The supreme clash came when the Valparaiso banner, which had passed from hand to hand and finally to Schiaffino, was seen wavering for some instants in a furious bloody tussle and then go down. But Giovan Maria Damiani of the Scouts snatched it up by one of its streamers. He and his rearing horse formed a group such as Michelangelo might have carved in stone against a confused tumult of fighting men, friend and foe.

As long as I live I shall never forget that scene.

At that moment the royalists fired their last salvo and a certain Sacchi from Pavia was blown to pieces. Then there was a shout of joy because the gun was captured. A rumour went round that the General was dead, and Menotti, wounded in his right arm, was running round asking for him. Elia lay wounded to death; Schiaffino, the Dante da Castiglione¹² of this battle, was dead and I saw his tall body lying on the bloody ground.

Almost on the hilltop, near the hut, I recognized, by his clothes more than his face, the body of poor Sartori. Certainly he must have been killed instantaneously because only five minutes before I had seen him climbing up the hill and he had greeted me by name. He lay on his left side, all huddled up with clenched fists. He had been wounded in the chest. I fell on him, kissed him, and bade him farewell. Poor Sartori, in his staring eyes and drawn features, something still remained of his longing for yet one more breath of that heroic air. All those who knew Eugenio Sartori from Sacile will for long speak of him. Like a hero, he had kept the promise he made at Talamone.

The dead Neapolitans were a piteous sight. Many of them had been killed by the bayonet. Those who lay on the brow of the hill had nearly all been wounded in the head. Yonder I could see a little dwarfish monster, who seemed by his clothes to be a local peasant, ferociously stabbing one of the dead Neapolitans. 'Kill the brute!' yelled Bixio and spurred against him with raised sabre, but the savage creature slid away among the rocks and disappeared; more brute than man.

As details of the great picture I can see those Franciscan friars who fought on our side. One of them was cramming a muzzle-loader with handfuls of bullets and stones, then he climbed up and let loose a hailstorm from his ancient piece. Short, thin, filthy dirty, as we saw him from below tearing his bare shins against the prickly bushes which gave out a nauseat-

¹² Another hero (of large stature) celebrated by Guerazzi in the novel *L'Assedio di Firenze*.

ing cemetery stink, he was an object for laughter and applause. How brave those monks were! I saw one of them, who had been wounded in his thigh, pull out the bullet from the flesh and return to fire against the enemy. During the battle we could see crowds of peasants intently watching the fierce spectacle from the high crags around us. From time to time they uttered yells which must have terrified our common enemy.

When the Neapolitans began to retreat under cover of their riflemen I saw the General again watching them with a look of exultation. We pursued them for some way and then they disappeared into a fold of the ground. When they emerged they were out of range on the opposite mountainside, followed by some hundreds of their cavalry, who had been under cover up to that moment and now rejoined them at full speed. From the battlefield we could see their long column climbing up to Calatafimi, which appeared as a grey mass halfway up the grey mountain, until finally they were swallowed up in the town. It seemed a miracle that we had conquered. A chill wind began to blow. We lay down on the ground. There was a melancholy silence. Night came all at once and Airenta and Bozzani and I went to sleep in a little cornfield, caressed by the ears of corn bending over us.

It was scarcely dawn this morning when reveillé sounded, but already larks were singing on high. I thought that perhaps we should have to march against Calatafimi, as last night I heard the General discuss it with Bixio. But during the night people had come from Calatafimi to inform us that the Royalist troops had left in the direction of Palermo. It occurred to me then to take a stroll over the battlefield.

I found Sartori there where he had fallen. No one had touched him, but he seemed to have been dead for three days. His cheeks had lost all colour, his hair was stiff, his skin had turned yellow, so that he was a horrible sight. I was so shaken I had not the courage to give him a last kiss. He would have done it for me; he would have buried me with his own hands.

Now I can see the hill, tranquil and deserted. Yesterday,

even the stones seemed alive and on our side. Up on those slopes lie our dead, more than thirty of them. I still have them all before my eyes as they were two days ago, bold, confident, gay. But one of them fills me with disquiet, that officer I saw at Novi and again at Salemi, and whom I shall never see again. For De Amicis, too, is dead and lies there in his glory with a name not his own.

The dead are less to be pitied than the poor wounded, lying together in that miserable village of Vita. They suffer God knows what pangs, alone, without attention, and with no other defence than their own helplessness. But what if a column of those savage Neapolitan soldiers should arrive? They have had orders to give no quarter.

The sun is setting. Down in the city the air is full of the sound of music from the local bands. They tell me that they have organized a ceremony for blessing the Dictator, presided over by a friar who has followed us all the way from Salemi. I shall not go down from this height. I cannot tear myself away from this lovely view until night comes. Among the many little woods down below I can see Alcamo; from here to there it is as lovely as the vale of Tempe. The scene is closed by the bay of Castellamare which seems to blend with the sky. And the sky is open to one's questing thoughts and swallows them up. Those distant waters have a smile of promise and one loses oneself in the depths as in the eyes of one's beloved. I catch a little glimpse of shore, only a glimpse, but I think that when we get there we shall hear some news of ourselves and of the world that has by now passed judgement on us.

Tonight I have to read out to our company Garibaldi's Order of the Day that I copied out in the municipal offices of Calatafimi where I found Captain Cenni in a furious temper about something or other. This is what I shall read.

'Soldiers of Italian liberty! With comrades such as you I can attempt everything!' What a shout there will be when the company hears this further passage: 'Your mothers, your sweethearts, when they come out on to the street, proud of you, their brows radiant etc. etc.'

Here comes Colonel Carini up the hill on horseback and he seems delighted. Can it be that we are off?

Alcamo, 17 May. On the threshold of a little church almost on the seashore.

We had a happy march from Calatafimi here, through a fertile countryside. But on all-sides, there were traces of the defeat we had inflicted on the Royalists: knapsacks, caps, bloody bandages scattered along the road. When we left at dawn we were all singing, but later, what with the sight of this debris and what with the sun which was enough to overwhelm us, we grew silent and proceeded like so many ghosts. Towards ten o'clock we came across some splendid carriages out to meet us, as though we were important people. Alcamo was close. In the carriages there were spruce gentlemen who paid their respects and welcomed the General, and where the footpaths ran down into the road there were crowds of peasant women, confident and quite without fear of us. Some of them devoutly made the sign of the cross. I saw one with two children in her arms fall to her knees as the General passed, and one of our men recalled how in Rome, eleven years before, the women from across the Tiber called him 'The Nazarene'.

At eleven o'clock we made our way into Alcamo. It is a lovely city, though sad. In its shadowed streets one seems to breathe a Moorish atmosphere. Lofty palm trees grow along the walls of its gardens. Every house looks like a monastery. A pair of eyes flash from a lofty balcony; you stop, look, and the vision disappears.

We were told that, before our arrival, numerous Royal troops in a great fury had landed at Castellamare, but soon retreated and re-embarked. Nothing further is said of this manoeuvre, but out at sea one can see two ships. They could be warships.

* * *

Five of us were guests of a gentleman who absolutely insisted upon having us to his house, and there we supped. What

humanity there is in this remote island, but what ingenuous ignorance of Italian affairs! He did not conceal his daughters, but they looked anxious, although they talked to us as if to old friends.

'Where do you come from?' the father asked Delucchi.

'I'm a Genoese.'

'And you?' turning to Castellani.

'I come from Milan.'

'And I from Como,' replies Rienti, without waiting to be asked. He has a head like one of those curly-haired, chubby angels that one sees with their wings spread, carved above the altars of churches.

'What wonderful places you come from, but why are you so poorly dressed, just like peasants? Come along now, tell the truth, you're really Piedmontese soldiers. No? Well, how have you managed to beat so many Neapolitans? They passed through here in such a plight, not half of them will reach Palermo.'

Then the talk fell on the war of last year. That good gentleman seemed born yesterday. He hardly believed that there was such a person in the world as Victor Emmanuel. Meanwhile we'd all had our share of wine and somebody mentioned Ciullo d'Alcamo and his lovely poem, and then we talked of Bari, of Puglia, and of the challenge that led to the joust of Barletta.¹⁸ Our host was amazed to hear us speak of such things. He could hardly be prevailed on to let us go; when we could in decency depart, his daughters gave us their hands, which we kissed respectfully and timidly and came away with something of a flutter in our hearts.

* * *

There was a hollow growl of thunder from over the mountains; all crowded down to the shore, thinking it was gunfire. 'Palermo has risen! On to Palermo!' But then over the moun-

¹⁸ Ciullo (or Cielo) d'Alcamo, an early Sicilian poet known for his *canzoni* in Dialogue form 'Rosa fresca aulentissima', mentioned here because he came from Alcamo. For the Barletta challenge see note 9, p. 26.

tains we could see certain dark clouds, sign of a thunderstorm that was passing away.

* * *

A mysterious rumour is going round that the General has lost all hope of succeeding against the 30,000 troops the Bourbons have in Sicily, that our expedition will be called off, that each of us will be given permission to escape as well as he can from this predicament. Everyone was in the depths of gloom at this. But the rumour turned out to be entirely false—perhaps a trick played by the enemy.

* * *

The friar who followed us from Salemi wants to spread an aura of religiosity over us. A short time ago I saw him on a horse on his way back to Calatafimi. 'Colonel Carini,' he said, passing my Commander, 'tomorrow I shall celebrate Mass at a tricolour altar. After that I shall be with you again.'

* * *

A few who had been left behind, having been slightly wounded at Calatafimi, have now rejoined us here. They tell us of the sufferings of our comrades in hospital at Vita. It is not known why, but wounds seem to become gangrenous. The doctors do their best for the sufferers, but death snatches them from their hands. Francesco Montanari from Mirandola, that friend of the General who was joking with him at Talamone, was one of the first to die.

And if it be true, I can understand the words that friar uttered when he was leaving for Calatafimi an hour ago. Our dead, I was told, are still lying unburied on the hills of Pianto Romano.

* * *

18 May, Between Partinico and Burgeto

We'd have done better to cross the mountain and avoid Partinico, even at the cost of burst lungs.

We ascended the slope on which the village stands and the slight breeze that freshened the air bore with it waves of unbearable stink. Hardly had we reached the top than we came in sight of the village, almost burnt out, and still smoking from its ruins. The column of troops we had beaten at Calatafimi had engaged the really heroic insurgents of Partinico. Having burnt the village, the Bourbon troops massacred the women and the helpless of all ages. There were corpses of soldiers and peasants with butchered horses and dogs among them. When we arrived, all the bells were ringing, I don't know whether in fury or triumph; the houses were still smoking and the people were in a frenzy among the ruins, priests and friars shrieking frantic cries of welcome. There were women wringing their hands in desperation and young girls, holding hands and singing, as though they were out of their minds, dancing in a ring around seven or eight already swollen and smouldering corpses. The corpses were those of Bourbon soldiers. The General spurred away from this scene with his hat over his eyes. And we all followed him deafened and disgusted. Now we are far away, but we still hear the bells ringing. It is 4.30 and I wish we could camp here tonight among these olive groves, so as not to lose the view of the Bay of Castellamare which, at sunset, must be a miracle of colour.

* * *

19 May. Passo di Renna

Yesterday Burgeto looked like a place of ambush. From out of their frowning houses, half-concealed among gigantic olive trees, peasants peered at us silently as though at a procession of ghosts. I have noticed that if one population welcomes us with joy the next we come across is cold and hostile.

We went on.

Along a road dug in the arid mountainside we passed through a gorge. A cold evening wind was blowing through it, which seemed to threaten us with a poor night's camp. It was very late when we halted on this mountain in a perfect amphitheatre. When we stopped we were completely worn out. From

Alcamo to this place, called Passo di Renna, are very many weary miles. But we hardly noticed them until we got to Partinico where all our gaiety was quenched and we sang no more.

Not since leaving school have I slept as I did tonight. My head on my haversack and my haversack on a stone, my body stretched along the roadside. But this morning, what joy; at daybreak, some village band or other came to wake us playing an air from *I Vespri Siciliani*. I jumped up and ran to the highest point where I am now writing, and my eye travels over the vast plain of Palermo, the Conca d'Oro. There lies the city, a vague shape between sea and mist. I can see ships out in the roadstead; so many that it seems if all the fleets of Europe have come by appointment to look on when, one day, we shall suddenly attack the city. Oh wonderful Cacciatori dell'Alpi!

Down below everybody is swarming round a great cistern, washing their clothes and their persons. It looks like a scene from the Bible in the valleys of Judea.

* * *

I forgot to say that about ten o'clock last night, as soon as we had camped and lit our fires, some Palermitan gentlemen appeared, after passing through who knows what dangers. I watched them as they met their old friend Colonel Carini who, after ten years of exile, is coming home with arms in his hand. Their affectionate embraces spoke more than words. Afterwards I learnt from them that everything is prepared in Palermo and directly we reach the gates of the city the people will pour out of their houses and overcome the garrison of 20,000 troops. They further told us that the police are trying to make the people believe that we sack houses, violate women, are the wrath of God, as they say in these parts. They went on to speak of the secret police. Ah, the Palermitan police spies must be terrible indeed. According to these gentlemen the police boast that one of these fine days they will massacre all the patriots, and make cushions for their wives out of the tresses of the Palermitan ladies,

Calatafimi is known to have made a very deep impression on the Neapolitan troops but, although stunned, they are still faithful to their King. About us, and the mainland of Italy, and of what they are saying about our operations and about our victory beyond the island, not a word. Before leaving, these gentlemen embraced us and arranged to meet us in Palermo in their own houses. Benedini, the doctor, pulled out his notebook and wanted to write their addresses by the light of the fire.

'Whatever are you doing?' exclaimed one of them, seizing his hand. 'Such things must be memorized.'

Sicilians are old hands at conspiracies, one can see. None of us would have imagined it was dangerous to have an address on one's person. Well, we shall remember the addresses given us by these gentlemen and we'll try to seek them out, always provided that they don't fall into the hands of Royalists on their way home.

* * *

Lieutenant Colonel Tuköry is riding up and down the road exercising a black horse which hardly touches the ground, it is so fresh. Extremely young for his rank, this officer seems to me the personification of Hungary, our sister nation in servitude. His face is darkly pale and he has refined features lit up by a pair of flashing, melancholy eyes. He had fought in the battles of ten years ago, battles with such strange names that they frightened me as a child when I heard them. He had seen Italian regiments in the service of Austria giving the *coup-de-grace* to his own country. But affection for Italy survived in the heart of that generous nation. The only thing is that we do not yet know how far the war we won last year may not be fatal for Hungary. That country has two worthy representatives with us, Tuköry and Türr, and in addition there are two rankers; that uncouth man whom I saw on board ship and Sergeant Goldberg of my own company. He is an old soldier, taciturn, touchy, but trustworthy and brave. We saw how he behaved at Calatafimi!

* * *

I have found out that Tuköry was aide-de-camp to General Bem and that he is a real military genius. Since '49 he has been in exile at Constantinople and we ought to honour him as much as we honour the exiles of '21, that sacred springtime of Italy's first awakening.

* * *

Soon we shall have rain. 'Lucky man who can get a seat down there in the Ministry of War,' said Giusti, that humorist from Asti, always joking as though the wine of his own hills ran in his veins. The 'Ministry of War' is a broken-down old carriage that follows behind us on the road with our secretariat and military treasure, which amounts to only thirty thousand francs as I have heard. But there are two real treasures in that old carriage, Acerbi's heart and Ippolito Nievo's mind. Nievo is a Venetian poet who at twenty-eight years of age has written novels, ballads, and tragedies. He will be the soldier-poet of our expedition. I saw him curled up in the corner of that carriage; a fine-cut profile, gentle eye, and genius flashing from his brow. With his robust physique he makes a fine soldier.

* * *

I can see five great casks of wine, basketfuls of cigars, and a pile of cloaks, sent up by some town council or other to help keep us warm. What generosity!

20 May. Passo di Renna

It poured with rain all night. We huddled round a great fire and took what shelter we could, while listening to the tales of Sicilians about this place, which has a very evil reputation. A murderous spot! The traveller about to enter this Pass from either end makes the sign of the cross and thinks sadly of home before he ventures further. A highwayman could easily appear among these steep rocks, or between the leaves of the prickly-pears and level a rifle at you. These evil-doers sometimes form a gang and lay up in this place and woe betide the traveller on

the road at such a time. Money won't buy them off; they're after blood.

Colonel Carini, who is a most eloquent speaker, told us tales of more chivalrous highwaymen who used to lurk in this neighbourhood. Although I could hardly keep my eyes open, I made a great effort to stay awake, but most of the others fell asleep. When he noticed this, Carini pulled his cloak over his head and said, smiling: 'Just like Mazeppa in the last verse of Byron's poem.'¹⁴

* * *

I have heard a rumour that on a certain mountain, whose name I can't at the moment recollect, there are thousands of Sicilians concentrating under the command of La Masa. Would it were true, because up to the present we are a small enough number and we feel the lack of those we lost at Calatafimi.

21 May. Above the village of Piojpo

There was tremendous excitement last evening towards sunset. All of a sudden they ordered us to strike camp and it was whispered that we were going to Palermo. As we came down the road that twists and turns to where the plain of the Conca d'Oro begins, we had the jolliest march in the world. This is what we had been waiting for, a night of adventure. All of a sudden we were halted.

'What's the matter?'

'Nothing, this is where we sleep.'

'What's the name of this little hamlet?'

¹⁴ The last lines of Byron's *Mazeppa* are as follows:

With leafy couch already made,
A bed nor comfortless nor new
To him, who took his rest whene'er
The hour arrived, no matter where:
His eyes the hastening slumbers steep.
And if ye marvel Charles forgot
To thank his tale, *he* wondered not—
The king had been an hour asleep.

‘Pioppo.’

‘And continuing down this road, where do we go from here?’

‘First to Monreale, then Palermo.’

‘Well, we might as well have stopped at the Passo di Renna,’ mumbled Gaffini, who has always got something to complain about. But in he went, together with the rest of us, through a great gateway and we were shut in like a flock of sheep. We lay down and kept quiet.

Before sunrise we were already up, our rifles on our shoulders. The dawn was so lovely, what with the colours in the sky above and fragrant scents rising from the earth below, that one longed to be able to transfuse one’s whole being into such beauty. To our left and ahead towards Monreale, on the hills of San Martino, we could hear volleys of musketry growing louder and coming nearer. Then we saw smoke and our men retreating along the steep cliffs, firing as they came. The Bourbon troops, who had come out from Monreale, had attacked them and were trying to turn our left flank and force us back into the mountains by the Passo di Renna. Had they succeeded, they would have annihilated us. What if today we are going to have the worst of it, we thought? A handful of Scouts passed at a gallop coming back from the Monreale direction. What’s the trouble, now? Nothing! The General with his staff passed us at a half-trot and the musketry on the hills continued. The men retreating, slowly and obstinately, along the heights, were the Genoese Sharpshooters. But beyond the hill where they were putting up such a stubborn resistance, there was also fighting going on. Who was over there? One of our companies who had got cut off? Or some band of Sicilian insurgents? One couldn’t make head or tail of it.

Meanwhile the sun had risen high and was burning hot and we were ordered, now forward, now back, halted, marched forward again and, always before our eyes, we could see a train of slow-moving mules bearing stretchers for the wounded. So it went on for an hour until once more we came back to the entrance to the Passo di Renna without anybody interfering with

us. We can hear no more gunfire. Two of our guns are planted up there on the brow of the hill keeping watch over Pioppo and the camp that the Royalist troops have pitched down below in the orchards. It is a large, well-laid-out camp. From where I am now I can see Palermo and the enormous green mass of Monte Pellegrino. Those white lines that look as though they were sketched in on the mountain slopes must be little walls to prevent landslides or paths leading to the summit. There is such peace in all the world below us here, such profound silence in all that life that one imagines must be there. Certainly they are waiting for us.

* * *

The friar who left for Alcamo to celebrate Mass on the battlefield of Calatafimi is now back with us. He rides an old mare, sitting firmly in the saddle as though under his robe he wore a soldier's uniform. He is gay and young and is called Friar Pantaleo from Castelvetro. Well, a friar too is part of the picture! He provides a contrast against the background of our little encampment. Salvator Rosa would have given anything to have seen those seven friars who fought at Calatafimi. Perhaps they are still with us now, having cast aside their habits.

* * *

A short time ago, while I was going down the road singing a hunting song, carrying an order from my captain, I came across an armed Sicilian who stopped me, exclaiming, 'So here you sing, while up there they die.' He told me that in the fighting of some hours back Rosolino Pilo had been killed. He pointed to the hills above Monreale. Killed by a bullet in the head while he was scribbling a note to Garibaldi. That poor little Sicilian volunteer wept as he told me this, and when he understood from my speech that I was not a Sicilian he asked pardon for having stopped me. He begged me for a few cartridges, but I could not give him any from the eleven that I still have in my pouch, and I left him perplexed and mortified.

21 May. Parco

While my clothes are drying by the fire, I take up my pencil to write, my head still ringing with the great strain of last night's march. The woman of the house, a good little old thing, who welcomed us like a mother, is cooking us a dish of macaroni, for we are nearly famished.

All yesterday up to the evening it was wonderful weather, clear and serene, but when we took up our arms once more, the sky became overcast. The sun had gone down and we were off. This time really to Palermo! No, we're going to San Giuseppe! And where is this San Giuseppe? Here on the right some miles on beyond the mountains.

Having gone some little way along the military road, we arrived at a dark, tumble-down little house standing all by itself, a real highwaymen's haunt. As we came up to this place they ordered us to leave the road and we followed one another down a narrow, stony, path. In front of the house two men worked as hard as they could to distribute loaves out of great baskets; each of us had three as we went past. It was as though we received three stabs in the heart, for we realized that we had to spend three days in these lonely mountains. How were we to carry these loaves? We fixed bayonets and spiked them one on top of the other. Our rifles, thrown out of balance in this way, pressed heavy on our shoulders.

It was then that I had the anguish of seeing Delucchi from Genoa seated on a stone, hugging his knees, racked by pain that robbed him of all his strength. 'Go back to our waggons,' I said to him, 'they will take you somewhere or other. You'll do nothing here; we can't take you with us and in half an hour we shall all have passed. Night will come and you will be here all alone.' I helped him to rise and he slowly made off towards the tail of the column, looking at us as though we were carrying away his last hope. And to think that he might have fallen into the hands of the Royalist troops; but I hope that he will be able to gain the waggons and be safe. As it grew dark, rain began to pour violently down in heavy drops; they were like

hailstones and hurt our cheeks. The wind blew cold and, ahead of us, there was a deep cold gorge and it seemed as though we were entering a wolf's den. Nevertheless, Lieutenant Rovighi rode his horse at breakneck speed. But all of a sudden we heard a rifle shot, fired accidentally by one of my company, and saw Rovighi roll to the ground. He had barely touched it when, like a cat, he leapt up and stood there without saying a word. He was unhurt. But his poor animal had a broken leg. We marched on, leaving Rovighi to bewail his horse, who was threshing about in the dark. We advanced as best as we could tapping the ground before us with our rifle butts like a procession of blind men. The darkness could not have been more complete. The path petered out. We had been walking for two hours and we had barely covered a mile. Not one of us could say he had not fallen over in the rough scree. 'Courage, up you go, show your mettle!' These encouragements were whispered to us as we got to a point where a group of men were busy with ropes and levers. They were trying to extricate that unfortunate old culverin that we've dragged with us from Orbetello and was now bogged. 'Oh, leave it lying there for good, for if we ever succeed in firing it, it will blow up and kill the half of us.' I was about to call out some such joking remark but the words died in my throat, for in the group I saw Garibaldi, Orsini, and Castiglia, all busy getting our artillery shifted as best they could. I heard the General charge Castiglia to see to its transport and to do it at whatever cost; then the group broke up and off we went again, marching on in the dark.

Turning back to look, we could see our camp fires at Renna still blazing away as though we were still there to enjoy the warmth. Down to our left, in the depths below, we could see lines of fires burning. It was the enemy camp near Pioppo. Away ahead, a great stationary light, like a supernatural eye watching us, was burning brightly, perhaps lit to give us our bearings.

The rain never stopped. We were soaked to the skin and the wind bore back the neighing of a horse that seemed to mock us. Towards midnight we heard a shot that shook us all. 'Ah,

so now it's come!' exclaimed somebody, imagining that the vanguard had run into the enemy. It would indeed have been a misfortune in that darkness and in the state we were in. But nothing more was heard of this and on we trudged; sometimes we fell, then we picked ourselves up, but nobody grumbled. What did that shot mean? We found a horse lying dead by the side of the path and they said it was Bixio's, who had been enraged because its neighing could have revealed our presence to the enemy and had blown its brains out with his own pistol. Byron, always Byron! Lara would have done the same.¹⁵

Towards dawn we passed close to that circle of light and found it was the mouth of a kiln or furnace. In front of it stood a tall dark figure watching us. Perhaps it was only an ignorant charcoal-burner but I like to think that he was placed there on purpose to keep the flame going like the column of fire that guided the Israelites through the desert.

At the first light the rain stopped. We could see Palermo before us and Monreale not far off, about as far as the Conca d'Oro is wide. We now saw each other and we looked like ghosts; our clothes were torn and muddy; many had almost bare feet. Tired, worn out as we were if a detachment of the enemy had fallen on us we should have been defeated.

We went down to this little village named Parco.

The indefatigable Genoese Sharpshooters keep watch in the orchards so that we can rest in peace. There are so many fires burning in the broad square that it looks like an inferno. Everybody is drying their clothes standing half naked in front of the flames. There's not a window open. We don't know where Garibaldi is, but we know he watches over us all.

¹⁵ Lara, the romantic hero of Byron's poem of that name.

... 'all that gave
 Promise of gladness, peril of a grave,
 In turn he tried

(stanza 8).

22 May. Still at Parco

I have made a friend. He is twenty-seven years old, although he looks as though he were forty. He is a monk called Fra' Carmelo. We've been sitting half-way up the hill on which there is a Calvary with three crosses, near the cemetery above this village. Before us stretched Monreale in its wealth of gardens. The atmosphere was gloomy and we discussed the revolution. Fra' Carmelo was deeply moved.

He would like to join us and share our adventures, great soul that he is, but something holds him back.

'Why don't you come with us, we should all love it.'

'I can't.'

'Perhaps because you are a friar? We've already got one and still others fought side by side with us without fear of blood.'

'I should have come, if I were only sure that you were on some great mission, but I have spoken with many of your comrades and the only thing they could say to me was that you wish to unite Italy.'

'Certainly we do, to make one great people.'

'You mean, one territory; as far as the people are concerned, one or many, they are bound to suffer and they go on suffering and I have not heard that you want to make them happy.'

'Of course! The people will have liberty and education——'

'Is that all?' broke in the friar. 'Liberty is not bread, nor is education. Perhaps these things suffice for you Piedmontese but not for us here.'

'Well. What do you want then?'

'War! We want war, not war against the Bourbons only, but against all oppressors, great and small, who are not only to be found at court but in every city, in every hamlet.'

'Well, then, war also against you friars, for wherever I go I see you have convents and properties, houses and fields.'

'Yes, indeed. Also against us, first of all against us. But with the Bible in your hand and the cross before you—then I

should join you; your aims now are too limited. If I were Garibaldi I shouldn't find myself at this stage of the proceedings still supported almost only by you people who came with him.'

'What about the insurgent bands?'

'And who told you they don't expect something more than you're after?'

I really didn't know how to reply so I got up. He embraced me and, clinging to my hands, told me not to laugh at him, that he prayed to God for me, and that on the following morning he would say a Mass on my account. I felt a great surge of emotion in my heart and should like to have stayed with him, but he moved off, climbed the hill, turned once more to look back at me from above, and then disappeared.

* * *

It is evening now and it does not appear that the enemy knows what has become of us. There must have been a great confusion in the Bourbon camp, they've lost touch with us and nobody informs them where we've gone. This people deserves high praise; not one single informer has been found among them.

23 May. Above Parco. Afternoon

At last the enemy has discovered where we are, and during the night the Bourbon troops have drawn nearer. At dawn we were ordered to set off in all haste and we have clambered up here. From where we are, a good thrower could toss a stone on to the roofs of Parco. Half-way down the hill below us, we have the Calvary and the cemetery. I can see the stones on which Fra' Carmelo and I were sitting yesterday. That monk has disturbed me. I should like to see him again. We shall stop in camp here all today and perhaps also tomorrow. What are we waiting for? What does this circling round Palermo mean, as though we were moths round a lamp? The crags to the right and at the back of us are magnificent, the view in front indescribable. Whoever is born here cannot complain of being

poor, for even on a handful of greenstuff you can live well enough here, if you have eyes to see and a heart to feel.

* * *

A young gentleman has reached us from Palermo and from his appearance I should think he might be Colonel Carini's brother. Tall, blond, robust, just as the latter. His name is Narciso Cozzo. He came well-armed to join us, and has been enrolled in my company. He too speaks of a city impatient and ready to rise. If all the youths of Palermo feel as he does there is no doubt we shall triumph.

* * *

With the telescope you can pick out great detachments of soldiers camped outside the walls of Palermo. While watching them manoeuvre in that great silence below somebody said, 'But one day or the other won't they come up here and attack us?'

* * *

A column of Royal troops is cautiously advancing across the plain up to the first slopes of the mountain that lies to our right. It is separated from us only by the dry bed of a little torrent. From the topmost peak we could hear a piercing shriek of alarm and a great cloud of smoke rose black from the summit into the pure, warm air of sunset. We picked up our rifles. Far below at the edge of the plain we could hear firing.

A band of insurgents hidden among the rocks was opposing the Royalist troops who were attempting to reach the first slopes of the mountain. Garibaldi stood there for a short time watching, then he ordered Bixio with his company to go down as far as the cemetery below us, and ordered Carini to occupy the top of this hill which, he said, would be the centre of much fighting. We were all ready. The skirmish down below grew livelier. On the crag behind us that column of smoke still rose, but white and thin now.

All of a sudden the rifle fire died away and the column of

troops trying to dislodge the insurgents retreated through the fields. Then it disappeared into the thick groves of oranges and olives stretching as far as Palermo.

* * *

Night falls. On every peak of this immense semi-circle fires are blazing as far as Monte Pellegrino; so many indeed that it looks as though we are celebrating Midsummer Eve. And Palermo sees them and perhaps hopes that tonight is the last of its servitude.

24 May. Piana dei Greci

Here I am sitting at the gate of a convent like a beggar. The town looks as though it has been devastated by a plague. A few ragged people wander along the streets and beg for alms. Our camp is beyond the walls, but not in such a pleasant place as on previous occasions. I woke up this morning while everyone was getting up and, in that dawn light, it looked like the resurrection of the dead.

On the far horizon one could see a calm leaden sea. Palermo could hardly be made out against the dark mass of Monte Pellegrino. In front of us there was a white mist which stretched all the way from Palermo to Pioppo. When the sun rose at our backs it threw long shadows down the slope from our persons and everything seemed to palpitate and we exchanged our 'Good mornings'. After the fog had lifted, we could see a column of soldiers coming out from Monreale; a confident body of men who took the road to Pioppo. It occupied the whole length of the road and even when the vanguard had entered the woods to approach Parco the rest of the dark mass of men was still coming on.

This time they really will come for us, we said, and meanwhile our gunners began to construct emplacements, with all speed. Our companies were drawn up on the road. We waited in silence and seemed to hear the heavy tramp of that long column of men far away out of earshot. From below Parco we heard a burst of rifle fire. The Genoese Sharpshooters are

taking the first shock, but although everything seemed ready for us to stand fast in the place where we now are, after the General had swept by, accompanied by his staff and mounted Scouts, a whirlwind of galloping figures, we were ordered to follow them at the double.

For some way we ran as hard as we could, then slowed down and then ran on again. I saw many throw themselves to the ground, utterly blown, others sobbing with pain. Somebody said that the Bourbons had burnt Parco, beaten the Genoese Sharpshooters, and were after us with cavalry as fast as they could, and that they would soon be on us. It was also said that most of those troops were Bavarian mercenaries, drunken types who would stick at nothing. It was a sad retreat on our part, almost a rout.

The road from Parco here to the Piana dei Greci winds between steep mountains. We rushed along as quick as we could, to the point where the road no longer ascends but levels out and reveals the latter town in the bosom of the valley. Panting, hungry, scorched by the sun, we let our eyes rest in this peaceful valley, but at a certain point we saw three mounted Scouts blocking the road. When we got there they made us turn to the right up the gloomy mountainside before us. Other Scouts stationed on the heights shouted to spur us on that the General was in danger. We climbed as fast as possible towards the peak from whence we could hear a trumpet anxiously sounding the call to arms. We reached the top in fives and tens as well as we could. The General had been up there for some time. In front of us, on the top of another mountain, the one which overlooked our camp of yesterday, we could see lines of Neapolitan Sharpshooters firing against us and their bullets hissed round us like snakes. A few Genoese marksmen returned their fire, but our rifles were quite useless at such a range and we merely stood looking on. That game lasted perhaps for an hour, then the Neapolitans began to retire and they disappeared over the top of the mountain. We too then retreated by the same way we had come up, heartily wishing that Monte Campanaro would sink into the bowels of the earth as far as it rises high

and haughty into the air. It is said that the enemy general had had the idea of crossing the two mountains hoping to occupy Piana dei Greci before we arrived, so as to throw us back and chase us all the way to Palermo. But Garibaldi forestalled him with wonderful foresight. Now we think that he has given up this idea and will follow us along the military road, the one that we had taken in our precipitate retreat. I have heard that some of our men were taken prisoner at Parco, among them Carlo Mosto, brother of the Sharpshooters' commander. It seems that he was also wounded, and we are afraid that all prisoners will be shot.

Marineo, 25 May

The Piana dei Greci friars were most polite. They gave us bread, cheese, wine, and cigars, as much as we wanted. And they showed us round the convent and the chambers where their dead are piled up along the walls, like people asleep or praying, immersed in thoughts of another life. It was in those gloomy surroundings that we heard the 'fall in' sounded and we rushed back to camp. The companies were already drawn up with artillery in the van. There were whispers in the ranks: 'The Royalists are coming, about 10,000 of them.' Evidently our retreat had to continue. But where will it all end? Perhaps at Corleone, where the road taken by the artillery eventually leads. Discussing the possibilities, we started on the march as the sun went down.

It was already almost night when, having left the military road, we set off along narrow paths through woodland, silent, subdued, full of melancholy thoughts. About ten o'clock we were halted and ordered to lie down where we were. It was forbidden to smoke, say a word, or move. I stretched out next to Airenta, watching a great fire burning far off in the mountains, and the sight aroused memories of those fires that are lit along my valleys on the eve of Saints' Days. Full of sweet thoughts of home I fell asleep.

When I woke it was dawn. Companies were quietly falling in. I learnt that during the night the Royalists, who are

pursuing us, passed along the military road quite near, watched by our sentries. They are going boldly ahead, quite certain of catching us, but in fact have us on their flank. Now we begin to understand yesterday's retreat and our spirits rise. I had the good fortune to get a billeting ticket. When I presented it the little old woman, who had to be my hostess, was trembling like a poplar leaf. In order not to scare her I retired resignedly. Then she grew sorry for me and, almost in tears, begged me to come into a miserable little room with only one chair and a bed fit for a dog. On the other side of a wooden partition I could hear a pig grunt.

'What are you trembling about?'

'Young gentleman, I have a little daughter.'

'Well, what of it, I have a mother and sisters too.'

'You have a mother and sisters, and where are they?'

'Oh, hundreds of miles away.'

'Poor souls!'

And she regained confidence and chattered away so much that I had to ask her to leave me alone. Just as I was about to throw myself on the pallet I heard a subdued whispering. I went to the door, curious to see the young girl. She was barely more than a child and I exclaimed resolutely to the mother, 'I'm certainly not going to sleep in that room.' So without another word I took my rifle and knapsack and cleared out.

* * *

Half naked and half clad in skins like a savage, pale, famished-looking, a poor lad stood and watched us with yearning eyes as we lined up outside the town. He was simply longing to come with us.

'What's your name?'

'Cicio.'

'What're you doing here?'

'I've come with you from Piana dei Greci.'

'Where are you going?'

'With you.'

'In this sorry state, and barefoot?'

Down he sat and made no reply. We found him something to put on his feet and to cover himself. And so clothed he came with us. He was so happy that he seemed another boy. And of course he wanted a rifle! In half an hour he knew the whole company by name.

'We'll teach you to read and write.'

'Oh! young sir, I'm not worthy.'

25 May. On the mountains of Gibilrossa

The name of Gibilrossa reminds me of Gilboa and casts a veil of tragedy over all I see around me. I wish I had a Bible so that I could read that passage where they pray that dew may never more bathe the hills, the cursed hills, of Gilboa.

These gloomy thoughts are quite out of place, because our fortunes are turning for the better and we should really bless these heights. Nevertheless, it would be prudent not to linger too long. We should either be all dried up by the sun or driven mad. Our heads seem wrapped in bonnets of fire. Wherever has the cool breeze of last night gone to? All of a sudden at 6 o'clock we left Marineo. The voices of shepherds could be heard gathering their flocks up the mountainside.

We were outside the town waiting for the order to march. When the General went by on horseback Captain Ciaccio gave the order to present arms. The General made a gesture of annoyance as though to show that this was no time for ceremony. We took the road down from Marineo into a deep valley, moving slowly and quietly. A few of us were singing in a subdued way. Only a man from Friuli, from the midst of the 7th Company, sang out loud, with a voice of silver, four verses from a sorrowful, charming air that went straight to the heart:

*La rosade da la sere
Bagna el flor del sentiment,
La rosade da Mattine
Bagna el flor del pentiment.*¹⁶

¹⁶ The dew of eve bathes the flower of sentiment, the dew of morn the flower of repentance (literal translation).

I broke ranks and went ahead to try to find the singer, thinking that it must be a certain Osterman from Gemonia, a friend of mine from last year. It was, however, a mathematics student called Bertossi from Pordenone.

'Bertossi! Was he at San Martino in a Piedmontese regiment?'

'Yes,' replied the friend from whom I was inquiring.

'Well, he must be the man who was promoted officer on the battlefield.'

'That's he. But say nothing about it, because if he knew he would resent it.'

'And why?'

'Why? Because he's made that way.'

I looked at the young man, who is only twenty but looks thirty on account of his dark full beard. I could hardly believe that he was the singer he had such a severe look, but the verses he had sung were not unworthy of him. What marvellous young men there are in that 7th Company.

All of a sudden, some time after dark, the column halted. We were at the lowest point of the valley and it was whispered among us that the vanguard had met the enemy, but fortunately this was untrue, for if it had been so we should have been annihilated. Once more on the march, we soon came out of the tortuous windings of that fearful terrain and saw thousands of lights before us on the heights. It was Missilmeri, all lit up at that late hour to do us honour. We got there at midnight. Every window of every house had a lamp shining in it, but very few people were out in the streets. We had news of La Masa and the force he had raised in these parts and it seemed that we should have a quiet night. At dawn we had to fall in and were told that in an hour's time we should have to take to the mountains to reach the camp where we now are. I went in to a miserable little hovel to drink a cup of coffee and there I found Bixio in such a black mood that at the sight of him I retreated. I went to the square where there was a water-seller who went along swinging his little cask as though it were a bell and selling drinks to our men who swarmed round his

barrel. He watched those who were drinking with such a look and with a laugh that seemed to suggest he would like to put poison in their glasses. I went off and met the youth that we brought with us from Marineo, who triumphantly offered me a bowl of milk. He offered it to me with trembling hands, so pleased he was to have found me again.

A trumpet call brought all our men running out from the houses from all directions. We started off on the march and arrived here. On our right I can see a great concourse of men swarming like ants; La Masa's bands. Looking round the landscape I can make out all the places we have been to since leaving the Passo di Renna. It looks nothing, but has cost us such labour! Over there is Marineo and its crag, which seen from here, seems more formidable than from near to. If it broke off from the mountain it would roll down on the town like a monster and disembowel it.

* * *

At last we learn that there is a world outside. For a fortnight we have been in a limbo and a little news is a god-send. Well, well, well; so the Government of Naples calls us filibusters! Their papers have reported that we were defeated at Calatafimi, that one of our leaders has been killed, that we have been scattered and are now pursued so that we cannot turn highwaymen and haunt the roads to murder travellers. We have learnt this news from some officers from the American and English ships anchored in the port of Palermo. A friendly visit that has done us all good! They first spoke with the General and then they wandered through our camp. What handshakes, so friendly and brotherly! One of these officers, a very young man with light blue eyes and the pink hands of a girl, rapidly sketched three or four of our men, including Colonel Carini. In his sketch-book I recognized the portrait of one of the insurgent leaders from Partinico, a figure suitable to sit as a model for Spartacus. The others mingled with us, exchanging news. They were obviously pleased to find us civil, educated people.

We loaded them with letters and notes, scribbled in pencil

on scraps of paper; greetings from the heart! These will be forwarded by them to our families by the first boat out of Palermo. They stayed an hour, and told us the city is like a barracks, crammed with soldiers; but they have given us good hopes of success. It is known they have brought the General a plan of Palermo marked with the Royalist positions and the barricades. Now they've gone and the General is in consultation with the Company Commanders.

* * *

We are no longer to wait at Castrogiovanni for reinforcements from the mainland. In half an hour, just as we are, many or few, we're off to Palermo. Bixio has told us: 'It's Palermo or Hell now!'

Colonel Carini has addressed our company. He said that the sun will rise tomorrow on our day of glory but he told us to stand firm if charged by cavalry. Meanwhile all the other companies had gathered round their own captains. They broke up with loud shouts of exultation.

* * *

31 May. In the Convent of San Nicola

The violent tempest we let loose on Palermo lasted three days—more than three days! Those who missed the fight must feel nearly mad with disappointment. We who were to go, left Gibilrossa as happy as though we were off to a fair!

From the Porta Sant'Antonino I have looked back and seen the mountain from which we descended on the night of the 26th and could more or less identify the spot where we halted to wait for dark. It was a solemn pause. Gaiety had changed to a mood of seriousness, as though a spirit from above had breathed over us. I had lain down between two rocks still holding the great heat of the day, and felt a delicious warmth stealing through all my limbs. Stretched out in that kind of tomb with my face turned to where the sun had set, I was seized with a melancholy desire for death itself. Then, recalling that the

next day was Pentecost, I was filled with a childlike happiness and a confused memory from my school-days came that the Normans¹⁷ had attacked Palermo on the eve of that very day. I imagined them as gigantic figures in armour, gleaming through the murk of antiquity, ready for the fray, a small faithful band under good leaders just as we were.

A delicious half-hour of dreaming!

It was, I think, about seven in the evening when we set off again. After nightfall we found ourselves clambering down in single file from crag to crag, by a scarcely perceptible track. Shortly before we had shouted 'Hell or Palermo!' and this seemed the road all right! The sky was clear and all was quiet. We were forbidden to utter a word. We felt hungry and at the same time drowsy. If somebody stumbled he fell on the man below and he on another, until there were eight or ten in a heap. Luckily no one was hurt by our weapons. After midnight we were down on the plain, only a few miles from the city. Dogs barked at us from scattered hamlets and to the right we could hear the sound of the sea. A few lights, fishermen's lamps perhaps, were shining beyond dense groves of ancient olive trees whose contorted boughs seemed to be writhing under torture. To our left, on the heights of Monreale, fires were burning. In the darkness ahead I could hear the heavy tramp of the preceding company. 'Who will be in front?' we asked each other, and we prayed they would be our best, most experienced men, so that they could fall on the enemy positions and overwhelm them.

All of a sudden there was turmoil in ranks near me and a shout of 'Cavalry!' and we heard the thud of hooves on gravel. In spite of the warning given as we left camp some of us panicked and in a flash we broke ranks and dashed into the fields as best we could, some clambering over walls lining the path, others sitting astride them. In the confusion shots were fired at a white horse coming at us like a phantom. But it was only Captain Bori's mount, poor beast, and the captain identified himself by shouting. The hubbub died down and we felt

¹⁷ In 1071 the Normans under Roger I invaded Sicily.

ashamed at Colonel Carini's severe silence and blamed each other for, perhaps, having given ourselves away to the enemy.

The shooting increased the dogs' barking; there seemed no end of them, near and far.

We passed close to an enormous building, but the inmates were all asleep or it had been evacuated. A few steps farther and we reached the main road to Palermo. The air was growing chill at the approach of dawn.

Groups of houses were now more frequent and we could see scared-looking people peeping at us as we went by. We were ordered to split up into fours and keep to the right of the road, close to garden walls; then we quickened our pace. From the head of the column came a shot, then a desperate cry 'to arms!' A terrible yell, a sudden fusillade, a rush:

'Charge! Charge!' and we were in the fight.

We collided with a crowd of Sicilian insurgents, the so-called 'picciotti'. Some we bowled over into the gardens and some we carried along with us. One of them, a gentleman, their leader perhaps, was upbraiding them furiously, as he moved away shaking his sword; but at that instant he was hit, spun round, called out 'God!', took three or four steps like a drunken man and fell into the ditch at the foot of two tall poplars alongside a dead Neapolitan soldier, perhaps the first sentry surprised by our men. I see him yet. Just as I can still hear a Genoese who cried out in his dialect when the fire was hottest, 'How can we pass here?' He was answered by a bullet square in the forehead that toppled him over with a split skull.

We gained ground rapidly, but at the Ponte dell l'Ammiraglio came up against almost savage resistance. On the road, on the arches, beneath them and in the surrounding gardens there was bloody bayonet fighting. Dawn broke and we saw that we all had something fierce in our looks. Once in possession of the bridge itself we were held up by heavy point-blank fire from behind a wall manned by a long line of infantry, whose crossed belts showed up white. I could see a wounded Neapolitan soldier dashing his head against the bridge wall to brain himself, but Airenta shot him out of pity and then with

that unshakeable calm of his, went on firing against the enemy line. Suddenly this vanished, enfiladed perhaps, while some cavalry charged our men on the left flank but were repulsed and fled into open country. Faustino Tanara, that pale, handsome, bold *Bersagliere* officer, came storming along from there with a handful of his men and we joined up with them, shoving forward and being shoved from behind, until we came to the cross-roads of the Termini Gate, swept by bursts of fire from a warship as well as from a barricade ahead of us. Some of the most daring had already got across in a wild rush under the eyes of Garibaldi, whom I saw on a horse, wonderfully cool and collected. Türr was next to him. Tuköry had fallen wounded shortly before, and I heard him say gently to two who wanted to carry him under cover 'On, on, on you go and see the enemy doesn't come to capture me here.' Nullo was already in the city with a handful of his Bergamasks, having leaped his powerful horse over the barricade among fleeing Royalists. The assault was also successful at Porta Sant'Antonino, but we were luckier, for with one dash we gained the Fieravecchia. Suddenly a bell began to peal hailed by our cries of joy, for it seemed like a promise fulfilled.

'But whatever are the Palermitans doing?' I asked a working man who popped out of a doorway armed with a dagger.

'Ah, young sir, three or four times the police let off guns and made an uproar in early morning hours with shouts of *Long live Italy! Long live Garibaldi!* Those who came out prepared were seized without mercy.'

'I see,' I said, 'the citizens fear another trick.'

In the company of this man we went through the narrow streets as far as Via Maqueda. There no one was to be seen, except a youth busy trampling underfoot the Royal arms torn down from the gateway of a palace. Gun-fire came from one end of the street, perhaps aimed at him. We entered another alley and what a sight met our eyes!

Three lovely girls in white, their lily hands clutching the grill of a broad low window above a gloomy arch, were gazing silently at us.

We stopped to stare in admiration.

'Who are you?'

'Italians. And you?'

'Nuns.'

'Poor things!'

'*Viva Santa Rosalìa!*'

'*Viva l'Italia!*'

And they too started crying '*Viva l'Italia!*' in sweet psalm-singing tones and then they wished us success in the battle. I shall always remember them as they were at that moment, like Fra Angelico angels. One of these days, if peace returns, I shall re-visit the convent and seek them out.

We reached Piazza Bologni and found it already occupied by about a hundred of our men. On the steps of a palace the General was interrogating a couple of prisoners, who were weeping like children.

'Do you want to go back to your own side? You can if you want to,' he said, and one of them started off, but the other stayed. The former hesitated a little and then, he too, decided to remain. They were young Calabrians, who seemed amazed that we had not torn them to pieces.

Hardly had Garibaldi seated himself in the entrance hall of the palace when a pistol shot rang out from within.

'They've assassinated him!' we yelled from the Piazza and crowded into the door. It was nothing! A pistol he carries at his belt had gone off and the ball had pierced the trousers above his ankle. We calmed down, and at that moment Bixio arrived.

I had seen him a short time before hurl himself at a man who, seeing him wounded, had begged him to retreat. Lucky for him that he found a door through which to save himself! Bixio was scarlet in the face; he grasped what was left of a broken sabre and planted himself in front of us: 'Now then!' he said, 'I want twenty volunteers, good ones—in half an hour we shall be dead, we're going to storm the Royal Palace.' He told off the twenty and they were already moving away when he was recalled by the General; he obeyed and entered the hall for

consultations. Inside there were already some Palermitan gentlemen and a priest.

The city was beginning to stir and one could hear a subdued clamour. All of a sudden there was an explosion from Castellamare and the first shell came roaring through the air and fell. The sky seemed filled with the sound of curses.

From that moment all the bells of the city began to peal. Shellfire continued at intervals of five minutes. The pauses were cruel and fraught with anxiety. About three in the afternoon citizens began pouring out into the streets, and we, who had been somewhat disheartened earlier, became more cheerful. Barricades now rose, as men and women worked with a will. A shell would fall and all threw themselves down, but once it had burst all started work again with a '*Viva Santa Rosalia!*' So night came and the castle ceased fire. The Royalists were in occupation of the high quarters of the city and we of the rest. The General had his headquarters in the Palazzo Pretorio and municipal beadles in their scarlet liveries, young and old, busily ran errands for him. Meanwhile new bands of insurgents were entering the city all night through the Termini Gate. As for us, we prayed for the night to be long that we could get some rest and prepare for what was to come.

31 May. Continuation

Dawn came and the night hours had passed so quickly that they seemed minutes. The Royalist shells from Castellamare sounded our reveillé. They were systematically aimed at the Palazzo Pretorio in the hope, no doubt, of smashing General Headquarters. The shells, however, fell on the Convent of Saint Catharine at one corner of the square. The General stood at the foot of one of the statues of the large fountain facing the palace. There he received messages from the fighting fronts and from there he issued orders. Every now and then we caught a glimpse of him as we sped through the Piazza from one quarter of the city to the other, wherever needed.

At one such moment as Bozzani and I were crossing a little square we longed for a drink. 'Let's see if they'll give us a sip

of water in this house here,' I said, and knocked on a great door on which were written the words 'English House'. The door opened a crack and in the courtyard we saw a crowd of frightened people. We went in and a gentleman approached in doubt as to how to receive us. However, on hearing us speak, he immediately became polite, drew us in among the others and had water and wine brought us. We drank, thanked him, and made to go. But the whole crowd thronged round us, including ladies, old and young; they took us by the hand, they begged us to stop and protect them. Some wept with compassion for us. They wanted to know our names and we wrote them on scraps of paper. They marvelled that soldiers were able to write. They bombarded us with questions. 'What's happening in the city? Who's firing? How long will it last? *Santa Rosalia*, how frightening it all is!'

'Please forgive my initial hesitation,' said the gentleman who had let us in, 'they told us you were all ferocious monsters, who drank babies' blood and cut old peoples throats . . . but you're civilized!'

At that we started to laugh. The women then asked us: 'Where is Garibaldi? Is he young? Is he handsome? How is he dressed?'

We answered in the midst of all that amiable hubbub while the lads handled our rifles and talked among themselves. Their faces lit up as they looked at us with envy. The old man, however, restrained them with a glance.

Out we went, promising to return. Hardly had we got outside when we saw a crowd at the door of a baker's shop. 'Why, it is the baker of *I Promessi Sposi*,'¹⁸ I said to Bozzani. 'We'd better hurry before they sack it.' On reaching it, however, we saw there was no rioting; people were taking their loaves, paying for them, and making way for others. A gentleman told us that his family had eaten nothing since the previous day as they had been caught by the revolution without provisions in the house.

¹⁸ The bread riots in Milan of 1628 were described by Manzoni in chapters XI-XIII of his novel *I Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed).

He added: 'You arrived so suddenly!'

'Well, are you pleased?' I asked him.

'I should just think so; you are our liberators.'

Off we went, making for the Benedictine Monastery where our company was. We came across Captain Bori's horse lying dead under an arch-way, the same poor beast which had nearly been shot as we came down from Gibilrossa.

'Here's the horse, perhaps that's his master,' said Bozzani, approaching a corpse lying a little farther on. 'Oh, just look, it's the poor lad who was pushed into our midst by that old man on our first march out of Marsala.'

Yes, it must really have been the same boy. I had not seen him since that first day and felt indescribable horror on finding him lying there. I should like to have been transported to the old man's hut, conjured up by me at that moment far away in its peaceful solitude, and know if he had any sad presentiment.

'What's that?' said Bozzani, listening, and we went off at the double towards a sound of shrieking women. 'Spy! Spy! After the rat!' they were yelling. We arrived too late! Ten or twelve furies had torn an unfortunate policeman to pieces. They had been on the watch for him since the previous day and he had finally risked coming out, dressed as a woman. But they recognized him, seized him, and reduced him to a terrible condition that passes description.

We fled horrified, but were cheered immediately afterwards by having to escort some nuns from a blazing convent.

Terrified by the general upheaval and possibly too by the armed Sicilian insurgents, who were going about in a threatening manner, they were being escorted by a handful of our men to another convent. Walking in single file they pressed close to us confidently and invested us with an odour of chastity. They kept expressing their thanks so warmly that they seemed to be treating us like old friends. One of them, a very pretty young creature, gave me a filigree reliquary containing a fragment of bone, gazing at me with soft tear-filled eyes, and telling me it was Saint Rosalia's and urging me to wear it round my neck

as it would save me from death. I hadn't the heart to laugh at her faith in its powers of protection and put on the reliquary. Among the nuns were two ancient ladies who might have been made of parchment. They were quite fearless and looked at us disdainfully as they let themselves be carried like inanimate objects by a couple of Bergamask soldiers.

'Who are those two?' I asked of the little nun who had given me the reliquary.

'Two sisters, duchesses, who bully us the whole year long.' So we reached the convent.

In the confusion of getting the nuns into their refuge I got detached from Bozzani and went off by myself to the Benedictine monastery. In an attic above the church, lit by a little window facing the garden, I found a section of my company taking turns to fire through the opening. I joined the queue and fired my shot on getting to the window. When I looked out to see the enemy below Cavallini impatiently pulled me away in order to fire himself, but hardly had he taken aim when a bullet grazed the wall plaster and hit him in the right temple; he fell headlong without a groan, dead. He had embarked on the *Lombardo* at Porto Santo Stefano and was enrolled in my company. On the evening of 25 May at Missilmeri he told me how happy he was. A humble man of the people, he felt deeply the honour of taking part in our expedition. We covered his face with a cloth. For him everything was over, happiness, fatherland, all else, even our pity, for we were soon concentrating on footsteps heard on the roof over our heads. It might be Royalists, we thought, but it was only some Genoese Sharpshooters who had got up there to fire from a better position. Some swung down from the roof to the cornices of the façade and we heard them chatting gaily as they fired.

So the hours passed and night came, the second night! By command of the Dictator lights were lit in every window of every house, rich or poor.

In the streets it was as light as day. We were cheered by news spreading about the city from mouth to mouth: the Royalists,

it was said, had been pushed back at all points. The barricades that had sprung up in every street made it impossible for them to break back into the city. On the gutters of houses and on balconies were piles of stones, tiles, and household stuff of all kinds. The enemy could either burn down the city or else leave it free to us.

* * *

They say that on the morning of the 29th the Consular Corps had protested and that warships out in the Roads threatened to blow up Castellamare unless the barbarous bombardment of the city ceased. Just rumour! The castle continued to fire worse than ever and hundreds of houses were destroyed and innumerable inhabitants buried in the ruins. There will be much weeping after these feverish days. The Royalists have done things fit for savages. Towards eleven a.m. that day Margarita and I, in an alley leading to the Piazzetta della Nutrice, found the corpse of a fifteen-year-old girl. She was beautiful even in death, and never have I been so moved as by the sight of that corpse. She had been violated and her tender body wounded in many parts until a bayonet thrust through the neck must have freed her from her torments. We wonder if we could carry the body to safety, for her mother might be searching for her. We had just lifted her when yells from the enemy pouring from a breach in a neighbouring house and a burst of fire only thirty paces off forced us to retreat. They were many and we were only two. We fell back on Porta Montalto where Colonel Carini was on guard. That bastion had been taken by assault by Sirtori with a small detachment from the 6th and 7th Companies. There were so many enemy corpses lying round that I still wonder who it was that despatched them.

Carini sent me to the Palazzo Pretorio to fetch ammunition. There I found Sirtori. Ammunition must be short, for he ordered me to tell Carini that the bastion must be defended with the bayonet. There seemed an air of discouragement in the Palazzo Pretorio. I wondered what the news was. Yet the

city was now in full revolt and resolved for anything rather than see the enemy in possession again. I went back to Carini with empty hands, he understood and said nothing. Later he sent me back again. In Piazza Pretorio there was such a dense crowd that, in Manzoni's words, a grain of millet couldn't have fallen to the ground. From a balcony on the left, almost at the corner of Via Macqueda, the Dictator was just finishing a harangue, of which I caught the final words . . . 'The enemy has made me proposals that I have considered insulting to you all, People of Palermo, and as I know you to be ready to die, buried in the ruins of your city, I have refused them!'

I can find no words to describe the crowd's reaction to this. At the terrifying yell that broke out from the Piazza my hair stood on end and my skin went all goose-flesh. People kissed each other, embraced, almost suffocated in their passion. Women, even more than men, demonstrated their desperate readiness to face all dangers. 'Thank you, thank you!' they cried, stretching out their hands towards the General. From the end of the Piazza I, too, blew him a kiss. Such a radiant face had never, I believe, been seen before as on that balcony at that moment. The very soul of the people seemed transfused in him. But about ten that evening I saw him under the statue where he spent the night, and he looked gloomy and worried. Lieutenant Rovighi had called me up to carry a message. With his own hands the General placed a paper between barrel and ram-rod of my rifle and ordered me to have it read by all commanders I could find as far as Porta Montalto and, once there, deliver it to Colonel Carini. I set off feeling upset. Vigo Pelizzari was the first section-commander I found and I handed him the note. He read it, looked somewhat worried and gave it back to me, but he said nothing to his men crowding round him. On I went, burning to know what was in the note, but although there was nothing to stop me, I dared not read it. Finally when I delivered it to Colonel Carini he told me the contents—'800 Austrians are said to have landed, the tyrant's last hope. In case of attack by superior numbers retire

to the Palazzo Pretorio.' Carini did not look at all put out by this news, but sent me back with an acknowledgement for the order received. I retraced my steps, thinking that a handful of foreigners could alter the fate both of the city and of ourselves. But on getting back to the Palazzo Pretorio I found the General in a better mood. He was talking to Rovighi and saying he hoped to settle things by next day and that the Royalists in the Palace were short of provisions and their communications cut with Castle and fleet.

I was overjoyed and, dead tired as I was, lay down not far off with the picket-guard.

Yesterday about noon we at last got the order at Porta Montalto to cease fire. I ran at once to the Palazzo Pretorio where I learnt that an armistice of twenty-four hours had been concluded, for the dead to be buried. It had only just been signed when a priest arrived, I think the one who had joined us in Piazza Bologna as long ago as the morning of the 27th. He was shouting out 'treachery' and saying the Bavarians were coming in by the Termini Gate: 'What Bavarians?' we cried. 'Why, Bosco's men, returned from Corleone!'

Off we all rushed helter-skelter and reached the Termini Gate just as they had surmounted a barricade. They stopped on seeing someone coming to parley and firing ceased, but one of their last shots hit Colonel Carini in the left arm near the shoulder. He fell and was carried to the Palazzo Pretorio as though in triumph.

Down at the end of the street in the midst of all those grim foreign faces I caught sight of Colonel Bosco, angrily pacing to and fro like a scorpion in a ring of fire. Oh if only he had arrived half an hour earlier! He could have got straight in and surprised us at Palazzo Pretorio with those troops of his, maddened at pursuing will-of-the-wisps by forced marches all the way to Corleone.

Luck has eluded this brilliant, bold, young Sicilian officer!

On the way back to Porta Montalto I went with Erba, by way of Piazzetta della Nutrice, to see if we could find that poor dead girl of the day before yesterday. She was no longer

there. While I was talking about her to Erba a pigeon settled on a gutter above our heads and fluffed out its feathers.

'Shall I have a shot?'

'Go on!'

Amazingly the pigeon fell like a rag—decapitated. 'Bravo!' we heard someone cry and saw five Neapolitan officers approaching us. 'Well, you are a good shot,' they said, shaking hands with Erba then with me, who was rather mortified by that lucky shot. But Erba said:

'Oh that's nothing, we shoot them on the wing!'

'In flight?' exclaimed the officers; 'then you really are Piedmontese *Bersaglieri*, are you?'

'What *Bersaglieri*?' we replied and, still under a hail of questions, let ourselves be led on by the five of them as far as the palace square. There we saw thousands of soldiers encamped. They were eating greenstuff like sheep by the handful and looked at us as though they would like to murder us. Had we not been so well escorted, not more than an ear apiece would have been left of us I believe. We went up to where a group of officers was standing among them. An old colonel received us courteously. He had a beard like cotton-wool glued to his chin, but was a fine figure of a man, ruddy and bronzed. He too tried to make us confess that we were Victor Emmanuel's regulars.

'Eh', said he, 'your king would be better advised to look to his own affairs. He won't always have the French to help him as last year.'

'If you'd been with us it would have been quite different,' said Erba quickly, 'we'd have driven the Austrians out of Venice too.'

'What's that?—Venice—Austrians?' exclaimed the Colonel, looking round, trying to conceal his annoyance but getting quite hot.

'And if we have another go at Austria as allies one year, you'll see——' The Colonel looked like a man losing his footing and searching round for something to hold on to.

'You'll see—you'll see you'll all be dead tomorrow,' he

broke off abruptly, 'you deserve a better fate, but you've forced your way into Palermo and Palermo will see you crushed.'

'So far though, we can only be pleased with Palermo.'

'Very well, go on being pleased.' Then seeing soldiers crowding round, and perhaps fearing for our safety, he made a move and had us escorted back.

31 May

Noon today was a solemn moment. We were ready. But the armistice was prolonged. Until dawn on 3 June we can rest, work, and make ready, and if we fail then, the city will have written a page of history to thrill the world which will be for the good of Italy.

* * *

The General has made a tour of the city, wherever a horse can go. People knelt in the streets, touched his stirrups, kissed his hands. I saw children held up towards him as before a Saint. He is well pleased. He has seen barricades as high as the first floor of houses; there are eight or ten of these every hundred metres. Now we can really say the whole population is on our side. An infinite multitude honours us, heeds us, and we feel warmed by their affection.

There is no longer any doubt! Simonetta is dead. We came across a *picciotto* wearing a red and white check shirt. 'Where did you get that shirt?' 'I took it off a corpse.' 'Where?' 'At the Benedictine Monastery.' 'Come with us.' A hole in the shirt proved that our poor friend had been shot through the heart. That splendid young man had died without one of us there to whom he could give his dying message.

We ran to the monastery and searched but found nothing. We could not even find out where he had been buried.

Many are missing from all companies and we don't know if they are dead or lying wounded in some house. Giuseppe Naccari, that tall young man with a face any artist would have loved to paint, the joy of my section on the march, fought to

the last without visiting his family here in Palermo. And they had been waiting so long for his return from exile! The day before yesterday he was struck by a bullet from below while firing from a belfry. It entered his side, passed behind his chest and came through a shoulder. He will die they say, and he has fallen at the very threshold of his home.

June 1860

2 June

Many of the Bavarian troops brought back into the city by Bosco have passed our way. They say that, on their march of 24 May, they were convinced of catching and finishing us off. On learning they had left us behind and we had entered Palermo, Bosco nearly went mad. He drove them here by forced marches, promising them they could fire and sack the city, paying no heed to those who fell exhausted by the way. 'Oh,' they say, 'if only we'd arrived in time!' and screw up their faces like cats licking their chops at sight of a dainty morsel. An ugly looking lot, these mercenaries! They are known as Bavarians, but are Swiss, Austrians, even Italians. They promise to fight against their comrades. Revolting boasters!

3 June, morning

Great joy! The ruined houses, the hundreds of citizens buried in debris are all forgotten! The Royal troops are evacuating; capitulation is as good as signed! We hug ourselves and stare about. Can we really have done so much? I seem to hear something like a pæan of triumph in the air, as when the waters of the Red Sea divided.

* * *

I have been back to that convent and got the nun who gave me the reliquary to come to the parlour-grating. On seeing me she seemed made of alabaster with an inner flame. She cried out and gave thanks to Santa Rosalia. I made so bold as to lift my hand to the grille, our fingers touched, she cast down her eyes and we were both silent.

6 June

The ratings of the English Squadron here seem much friendlier than our own men from the Piedmontese ships *Governolo* and *Maria Adelaide*. When we go out boating in the evenings we come across French, Austrians, Spaniards, Russians, even Turks, who all stare at us dumbly with curiosity. But the English hail us, invite us to climb aboard and, when we do, welcome us like admirals. There's no bottle they don't open to share with us, no knick-knack they don't offer us, no corner of their ships they refuse to show us. We pass whole hours with them; whether we're good-looking or ill-looking they want to make pencil sketches of us, and before we leave we all have to sign our autographs. An idea comes to me; Sicily is lovely, rich, a world on its own. By our united efforts we have now detached it, or nearly so, from the mainland kingdom—if we don't succeed in making a united Italy, I wouldn't mind betting that it would be the English who would take possession of the island. Isn't their flag-ship here in port called *Hannibal*?

7 June

We were a merry party dining in the large room of the Hotel Trinacria to celebrate the arrival of a group of patriots who had come by fishing-boat from Malta. They landed at Scoglietti and by dint of hard riding and hard cash had come straight to Palermo. Champagne flowed and joy was unconfined. Joy on your account, gallant Lombard spirits!

9 June

Well, we watched them go! An endless column, horse, foot, baggage-wagons, filed before us down to the sea for embarkation. To us it seemed a dream, but what can it have seemed to them? Some were downcast, others haughty. The infantry of the 8th Battalion that was in action at Calatafimi and here in Palermo, where they had losses all over the city,

came proudly by. They must have been commanded by some brave man.

Off they go and may we meet again as friends. But it is a long road to Naples!

10 June

Tuköry is dead. Not out in the open, not in battle where we could see him. His soul has passed, but not to shouts of victory. He has died by inches, in bed. Death that he so often rode to meet at the gallop with sword in hand has crept to seek him. They had amputated a leg smashed by a bullet at Ponte dell' Ammiraglio. We might yet have had him on his horse with us, but gangrene set in and killed him. Goldberg, my old Hungarian sergeant, now lying in bed with two wounds received on the morning of the 27th, when told of Tuköry's death drew the sheet over his face and said no word. His *Loyos*, he used to call him. Thus sheeted, he too seemed a corpse. Perhaps he was thinking that when the Magyar exiles return to Hungary it will be without the fine wise cavalier who gave so much of himself on his way through the world. Or maybe he pictured him when serving with the Sultan's Arabs against the rebel Druse, galloping across Armenia. Or maybe he regretted his sword was ever drawn on the side of a tyrant. But whatever his regrets, he washed them away in Russian blood when, from the bastions of Kars, he could wreak his hatred against a people who had joined with Austria to ruin his country. . . .

11 June

By the same route as we followed from Marsala to Pioppo and then direct, sixty young men under command of Carmelo Agnetta have reached Palermo. They made the voyage from Genoa to Marsala in a nut-shell called the *Utile*, crammed like negro slaves. What a relief it must have been for them to land at Marsala after such an agonizing journey! What a sensation to pass the field of Calatafimi! They must have thought of our fallen and felt sad at not having known them in life. And on

getting here and seeing Palermo half in ruins, they must have felt their anger rise and gesticulated towards the foe and sworn to get even. . . .

They have brought us some two thousand rifles, good and bad, ammunition, and their own brave hearts. Among them is my friend Odoardo Fenoglio from Oderzo in Venetia, a resplendent officer of the Pavia Brigade whom I met and embraced at the cross-roads in the centre of Palermo; there is Cavalieri, there is Frigerio, brave, civilized men come in time to pay their respects to the remains of Tuköry, who is to be buried today.

* * *

We were all there, all of us, even such of the wounded who could leave their houses and hospitals. At the head of the cortège of mourners came Türr, an ironside, not made to show sorrow but so dejected that he seemed on his way to his own death. Flowers were thrown from windows on to the bier and on to us. From them and from laurel wreaths came a sweet odour of death. This impression was heightened by the silence of the crowd and the attitude of weeping women, dressed in white, kneeling on balconies. Everything, the very stones even, seemed to share a sense of consternation. I saw some of our men, tough, experienced types, pace forward with pale scared faces. Rodi and Bori, two scarred veterans, seemed to be walking in their sleep. Maestri, who lost an arm at Novara and from there hastened to Rome where a French shell-splinter shattered the stump, my poor Maestri from Spotorno, simple and brave like all from our Ligurian shore, he too was weeping. And so was I. At one moment of intense emotion I prayed with a bitter longing, never before experienced, to be enclosed in that coffin, side by side with the corpse. Oh to be there on the bier, yet be aware of this slow procession, of streets, of windows thronged with people, following the cortège as far as possible with their eyes and then pursuing it in thoughts! The crowd divides; voices are heard now—what do they say?—things fall—flowers?

The funeral march now sounds loud and must penetrate the coffin. Shrill notes of trumpets and wailing of flutes seem to turn to tears. Down, down, it goes into darkness, into the earth, to the sound of human weeping transformed into music. And as soil covers the newly dead, soil itself but dust of those who died before, one is aware of the *lacrimae rerum*.

A bare week ago Adolfo Azzi died too. How boldly he stood there on the *Lombardo* as we approached land, his powerful arms on the tiller, his eyes fixed on Bixio whose ardent gaze now took in Marsala close at hand, now the dark shapes of the ships pursuing us like lionesses over the desert. I see him yet and I shall see him as long as I live, with his calm face and challenging air, with his broad shoulders, standing erect stripped to the waist, a chest fit to receive a hero's wound. Yet death came by a bullet through his thigh, a splintered ball, and within five days poor Azzi was dead.

Night

Not during the restless nights of battle, but now when we have a measure of tranquillity, as I think over scenes at the barricades sadness overcomes me. I remember one March evening of my childhood when we little ones were listening to our mother telling stories as we clustered round the fire crackling merrily as though itself one of the family. Suddenly a bell tolled from the belfry; the *De Profundis*. Mother made us pray for the departed. But single tolls now changed to double, which in our parts mean that former dead of earlier years are to be commemorated on the morrow. Mother raised her beautiful eyes as though in thought, striving to remember who was to be commemorated; we kept quiet, waiting for the story to begin again. Suddenly father came in and sat down sadly by the fire.

'What's the matter?' asked mother.

'Nothing.'

'But they've just tolled the bell; who for?'

'For those who died at the barricades of Milan.'

I trembled as I looked at my father. *Dead, Barricades, Milan;*

three words from another world that struck chill into my heart. I was only nine years old. That night I couldn't sleep. Ever since, I have treasured a store of sadness in my heart, a draught which, as I grew older, I sometimes quaffed, this I could never find words to express until I found it echoed in Giusti's poem, *Sant' Ambrogio*, in those words: *Sgomento di lontano esiglio . . .*¹

12 June

I had said to Airenta: 'My dear Jerry, one of these fine nights you will be found murdered in some alley.'

Jerry blushed to the roots of his hair and nearly grew angry. Gradually, however, he opened up and told me that on our first morning in Palermo when we lost each other in the Fieravecchia he and a man of Cairoli company had been ordered by Bixio to enter a house and get those inside to throw things down to others below making a road-block.

'They must have been suddenly wakened by our shouts,' said Jerry, 'for they were rushing about like madmen, weeping and crying out: "Take what you want! Only spare our lives! Who are you?" "Garibaldi's men." Then they all started to help us, men and women alike, and they threw out everything that came to hand; they would have thrown themselves down as well as their goods! We entered a room where there were two young girls. In a flash we seized the mattresses, hardly noticing they were still warm, the girls having just scrambled out. We paid them scant attention and they hardly troubled to cover themselves, but started to help us fling the stuff out, crying *Santa Rosalia!* and *Viva L'Italia!* I pulled my comrade downstairs, but when I got to the street looked up. There they were, hanging out of the window, clapping their hands for the revolution, quite transfigured by hair flying loose over bare

¹ A reference to a well-known poem by the Tuscan poet Giuseppe Giusti in which his customary humour is blended with compassion for his fellow men, even for the Croat mercenaries in the service of Austria. The words quoted 'Fear of distant exile' express homesickness and, in the context of the poem, childhood memories.

shoulders. . . . I took note of the house . . . I've been back; they remembered me . . .'

Poor Jerry! I too have seen the girls and he's in love with one of them. Though I've said nothing, if I were he I'd take back this sixteen-year-old daughter-in-law to that saintly mother of his, about whom he talked so often in our nightly bivouacs that I could imagine her in her lonely country house with its towers, half-buried in green woods beyond Genoa. And to tease my bride I would often ask her later if she had not been scared that particular morning. She would blush and lay her head on my shoulder then and I would kiss her hair and bless the memory of our first chaste, heroic, meeting.

In the Convent of the Trinity. 13 June

By the witches of Macbeth whatever have I seen! Crossing the portico of this building in the semi-dark, I tripped over something; startled, I groped with my arms to keep my balance and all but smashed my head against the wall. Then I spun round and saw a hand, a horrid black hand, protruding from the earth. It seemed to be moving in a threatening way. I called for help and we began to excavate. Three Neapolitan infantry-men, still half dressed in blue uniforms, had been bundled into a shallow grave. . . . So far I have put up with everything, but when the face of one of those corpses was revealed I fled. It is well to cover the faces of the recent dead.

On the way back from Monreale. 14 June

How superb life must have been when the Saracens, the Normans, and then those other high venturers who bore the Swabian eagle on their wrists came here to graft the native Sicilian stock.²

Let your imagination run free, go back in time and adopt what rôle you please—warrior, poet, or churchman and come on to the stage. Here before us is the famous cathedral. But

² A brief indication of the three great Epochs of Sicilian history, the Saracen (or Arab) in the 9th and 10th, the Norman in the 11th and 12th, and the Swabian (or Hohenstaufen) in the 13th centuries.

with the best will in the world we can't attune ourselves to the spirit of such a place of worship as this. One of us said: 'Here we should really remove our shoes.' He was expressing his awe. Another, after gazing for some time at the columns and great mosaic in the apse, fell on his knees and, still staring up at the vaulting, clasped his hands with arms raised to form an arch above his head. The gesture was a prayer.

One leaves, apparently inspired. But no! The tip of the devil's tail must intrude, as the saying goes! Hardly had we come out when we nearly started a brawl.

Our doctor, Benedini from Mantua, had been grumbling all the way about coming to Monreale, at a rumour he'd heard that we wanted to appropriate Sicily for ourselves and that the bells should be rung to rouse the people against us.

We told him to keep quiet and it was just a joke, not dreaming what he was hatching. In church, however, he had become angrier and angrier, and, when we came out, went up to the first man he saw whose appearance he didn't fancy and shouted out: 'So you're the one who wants to start another Sicilian Vespers, are you?'

The man, who though no simpleton, only half understood the question, seemed about to answer 'yes'. So Benedini started hitting him. What a business! Had a priest not intervened in time, there'd have been trouble!

We pitched into Benedini as we came away, but he was now calm, as one who had done his duty.

Convent of the Trinity. 15 June

I have paid a visit to Colonel Carini in his little room high up in the Hotel Trinacria. Whatever has happened to that robust physique? He held my hand and inquired after Garibaldi, the Company, and his friends. Then suddenly: 'Were you present at Tuköry's funeral?' 'Yes, Colonel.' He looked round and held my hand tight. His two boys never leave his side. They are the image of their father, especially in eyes, now bright with suppressed tears as they heard him ask me if I had been at Tuköry's funeral. When he went into exile in '49

these sons of his can hardly have been more than babies. They came from Messina aching to embrace him and share his triumph, and have found him incapacitated by that accursed Bavarian bullet.

A lady, marked by suffering, moves slowly and sadly through the room. When her eyes meet her husband's she stifles a sob lest he notice it. Obviously he is very down. What tragedies, what mourning, what bereavements there are on every hand.

I left, much affected. As a contrast, up dashed that little grig of a boy, Ragusa's son, who is always running after us as merry and lively as can be. The father, who runs the hotel on the grand scale, kept open house for us during the bombardment. Any of us who wanted could go in for refreshment. There were, however, other things to do, and few could avail themselves of the opportunity. Some did, though, and I know one who gormandized like Margutte in Pulci's *Morgante*.³

* * *

Gusmaroli, an old Mantuan priest, is a small, thick-set, stooping figure who walks like a sailor. He has flowing white locks and copies the cut of Garibaldi's beard. He gives one an idea of what Garibaldi himself will look like in twenty years' time. I've studied him and it really is so. He is aware of the slight resemblance and revels in it; during the three days' battle he went round playing the part, and when he appeared at the barricades the Sicilian volunteers cheered for Garibaldi and fought and died willingly beneath his eyes.

16 June

Ippolito Nievo always walks by himself, looking into the distance, as though to broaden the horizon before him. Those who know him catch the notion of looking too, to see if they can capture some shape or glimpse of the landscape of his imagination. His usual companions are from the Scouts:

³ Margutte was a huge glutton in Luigi Pulci's poem *Il Morgante*. Pulci was a Florentine (1432-1484).

Missori, Nullo, Zasio, Tranquillini. Today I saw him with Mancini, whose eyes are as blue as the lakes of his native Tyrol. When I come across any of these Scouts, now in smart Hungarian-style uniforms, already rendered illustrious in '49 at Rome by Masina's cavalry, I feel like saying: 'Would any of you take me pillion when you charge across the battlefield?' I should like to feel my heart beat in unison with, I think, Mancini, a hero not yet celebrated in any poem. He is neither Virgil's Eurialus nor Ariosto's Medoro, nor do I see him as a modern; he has some knightly quality of days to come. If one were a woman one would fall in love with him and were love unreturned, die for him.

I often see him with Damiani whom, if I were a sculptor, I'd like to cast in bronze, he and his horse together, rearing over a confused mass of heads and arms as I saw him when he snatched up our banner at Calatafimi. During the second day of the bombardment of Palermo, I caught sight of him leaning against a side pillar of the main gate of the Serra di Falco Palace in Piazza Pretorio, perhaps as Garibaldi's orderly, for his saddled horse was stamping beneath the portico. He had the same expression I saw at Calatafimi. He was talking to himself as I passed. He seemed to be watching, first the palace where Garibaldi was, then St. Catherine's Convent where shells were falling and which was ablaze through the roof. Perhaps he was wondering how to save Garibaldi should one of those monsters pitch a little nearer.

17 June

Every day I have been to visit that divine little nun in her tomb-like fortress of piety. 'When will you come again?' she always repeats in her musical voice. For some time the old nun chaperoning our interviews must have guessed me to be no relation, but she said nothing and seemed to enjoy the situation.

Today I went on purpose to say good-bye, but couldn't do it. Poor Sister! . . . She must have guessed this was farewell from the expression in my eyes, for she looked at me in such a

way that my arms throbbed with longing to seize the bars and smash them so that I could say to that poor soul: 'Oh leave this gloom and live!' She drew near, her face was close to the grille; I kissed the cold metal, we both kissed it and I drank in her breath.

Away I came and as I marched on in the dust under the burning sun to unknown destinations, my fancy conjured up a vision of a red shirt and white veils. And meanwhile she is shut in there waiting for me to come tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow!

* * *

Patriots, patriots
We conquer or die!
Fire, fire, fire!

Singing such popular songs and strumming instruments, the Palermitans, rich and poor, are thronging with wild enthusiasm to throw down the walls of Castellamare. Some wield huge iron bars, and ladies of the high nobility carry little hammers for pulverising lumps of mortar. After several days and nights of work the castle is now demolished.

It lies flat like a giant of a heroi-comic poem, its belly split open for all dogs that pass to sniff at and cock their legs against.

* * *

What a card Giusti is, that volunteer from Asti. While we were all snoozing during the noon-day heat in he marched with his mask-like face, stood in the middle of our dormitory of forty beds, and cried out, 'Boys!' Up we all sat, thinking it was the Colonel. 'I've just had news from Piedmont! Victor Emmanuel has founded the Order of Disembarkation and has made you all *Cavalieri*.' A burst of laughter followed. He went on: 'Silence! Each of us is to be given one of those estates we saw on our march. . . . I can't promise to accept mine, but His Majesty's intention is not displeasing to me. Bye-bye.'

He fled, flapping his feet like a clown, pursued by a storm of yells, and was still guffawing in the street.

But Giusti is no fool, and I wouldn't mind betting he meant to touch one or other of us on the raw.

Palermo, 17 June

I've not yet seen them, but I know that some days ago six or seven of Pisacane's men, who had escaped the Sapri massacre, arrived here from Favignana. When we sailed past the Ægades, those islands which seemed to spring up from the sea to welcome us, they were there in dungeons below water level. What a quiver of joy they must have felt, if, by one of those mysterious premonitions that sometimes come like flashes from somewhere beyond human experience, they guessed that out beyond the surges beating and foaming at their prison bars, Garibaldi and Liberty were sailing by.

Oh precursors, what tears we shed, what things we imagined after your disaster! Sapri, a name lovelier, more renowned, than our own Marsala. Only three years ago! It seems an age! Far away in the Alps we cast our thoughts longingly southwards. This land of the Two Sicilies called to us with the magic of its name, its seas, its skies, and the verses of the girl-gleaner who in the poem followed the corn-coloured hair and blue eyes of the hero Pisacane. The Bandiera brothers, Conradin, Manfred, and then Pisacane, yet another blond hero of courteous aspect. And now here is Garibaldi, as fair and as fine as any of them, but the only one of them all favoured by fortune.⁴

Dark Sicilian girls, ignorant of all beyond their island and of the world opened to them by Garibaldi, worship him. I'm told

⁴ Abba here lists those who came to a tragic end in southern Italy, both ancient and modern. First Pisacane (see note 3, p. 6), then the Bandiera Brothers who invaded Calabria unsuccessfully in the year 1844; Conradin, son of the Emperor Conrad IV, who was defeated by Charles of Anjou (1269) and executed; Manfred, son of the Emperor Frederic II, who was killed in battle at Benevento (1266). Influenced by Dante (*Purgatorio* III, v. 102-144), where Manfred is described as: '*Biondo . . . e bello e di gentile aspetto.*' Abba tells us that all these were of fair complexion, as indeed was Garibaldi.

they whispered together in groups after he had ridden through the city, their eyes flashing in adoration like so many Saint Therasas.

* * *

Antonio Semenza says that they have found among the papers of the Royal Palace a fleet order issued in Naples, with instructions as to what to do if they intercepted us. 'Send them to the bottom, saving appearances.' Can it be true?

We certainly should have been too many for gallows or prisons! But were there in the Neapolitan navy men prepared to obey such an order, men ready to wipe us out?

18 June

There is a certain man I have noticed admiringly ever since Marsala. He has a wrinkled hatchet face, fresh complexion, and eyes and gestures of a hawk. With his mixture of brown and grey hair, he might be any age. Whoever can he be? How old is he, with his athlete's frame and spare body? Maybe, I thought, someone like Nullo's uncle or elder brother. But today I inquired. I record it so as not to forget; he is Alessandro Fasola from Novara and is over sixty. He has spent the forty years since 1821, working, hoping, and fighting. Always ready for the call, from Santorre Santarosa⁵ or from Garibaldi, ever youthful, bold, and dependable.

* * *

The Genoese Sharpshooters have come out in new uniforms. How smart they are in their light blue tunics and caps of the same colour setting off their refined faces! I'm not sure if the general effect is added to or diminished by this tan from the burning Sicilian suns.

Everyone would like to join the Sharpshooters, but not all are Genoese. Well, it's understandable! There exists a certain

⁵ Santorre Santarosa (1783-1825); one of the leaders of the Piedmontese revolution of 1821. He later came to England and died at Sfacteria fighting for Greek independence.

aristocracy of courage and these men rightly appreciate the fact and wish to be on their own. Have I not myself heard one of my own company, and not one of the best, say that Garibaldi should keep apart those who landed at Marsala and send us on and on and on, as long as one man was left alive?

19 June

We are off, and not under Garibaldi's command! Of course everything depends on him, the revolution, the war, and much more—including the demagogues—so he must stay here.

To help him he has Francesco Crispi, a little man who puts me in mind of the powerful Pier delle Vigne.⁶ But even though far from Garibaldi we shall still be with him. 'Go in good spirits, boys,' he said. 'I've given you Türr. If I need you he'll bring you flying back.' Then he began talking Genoese dialect with some of us from Liguria, seeming to take a childish pleasure in the language of Bixio and the Sharpshooters.

21 June

Medici has arrived with a regiment already organized and equipped. They came in by Porta Nuova under a rain of flowers. The vanguard was composed of forty officers in the uniform of the Piedmontese army.

My brigade, led by Türr, has left for the interior of the island. We of the original expedition are lost in the flood of newcomers, but treasure the memory of the twenty-five days when we toiled and fought in faith, alone. Now we are to go through the island, recruiting men and passing like pilgrims from place to place, until the enemy stops us and we come to blows and blood once more or unite for the honour of Italy.

⁶ Francesco Crispi, the statesman (for whom see Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, *passim*) is compared to Frederick II's great chancellor Pier delle Vigne immortalized by Dante (*Inferno* XIII).

From Palermo to Missilmeri, 22 June

Romeo Turola, who is dozing, and I, who am writing in my diary, are riding in a princely carriage drawn by two powerful greys which would look well under a couple of dragoons. Once again I have seen Porta Sant'Antonino and the Convent and that wall which, at dawn on 27 May, thundered and lightnined like a storm cloud as we advanced. The two tall poplars, at the foot of one of which I had seen that first dead Neapolitan soldier, rustled all their leaves with an almost conscious whisper of happiness.

As we passed beneath them I thought with horror of the dead man and of some poor peasant mother from the mountains of Calabria or Abruzzi standing at the door of her cottage, filled with anxiety at the thought of war and of her soldier son whom she still perhaps believes fighting. And the thought occurred to me of the Bourbon princes, of whom not one has so far drawn his sword.

I turn to look back. Palermo is far below, just as we saw it from Gibilrossa, from Parco, and from the Passo di Renna but now free in its glory, rejoicing day and night amid its ruined houses. As we left I heard that certain intriguers had arrived in the city to try and upset things. Perhaps they had been there soon after the capitulation? What can have been on, for instance, that night when we were hurriedly assembled and kept under arms for hours in Via Macqueda? Rovighi told me that a popular rising was planned to set up La Masa, snatch power from Garibaldi and replace him by the Sicilian. It was calumny, but why?

Missilmeri, 22 June

The population here, who had illuminated the village in our honour on the night of 20 May when we were few and had little hope of success, now turn their backs on us. Whatever have we done to offend them? They won't say, and we can't guess. They smile as they speak, are gay, converse with us, but they communicate with each other by scarcely

perceptible signs. They seem to have several souls in their bodies.

* * *

Fra' Pantaleo has put his finger on it. They are hostile because of the conscription decreed by Garibaldi as Dictator.

'What do you expect?' said the friar in church. 'Conscription is necessary, but it's something easily avoided. Fathers and mothers, get your sons to go as volunteers for the nation's sake and they won't be conscripted. And if you don't want to deprive the aged of support, or wives of husbands—here's another way: enrol as National Guards! No more talk of conscription then!' Down from the pulpit came the wonder-worker, made a great sign of the cross with a sweep of his arm, and the people, now satisfied, showered blessings on his head.

* * *

Now we are really beginning to look like soldiers. The group of officers I have just seen in the square would do honour to the finest army in the world. All in the prime of life, between twenty and thirty, robustly built, with frank open faces and courage in their looks. They are doctors, engineers, lawyers, artists. Suppose they'd all been like Daniele Piccinini? What a wrench it must have been when he left his father. I can imagine the austere old man at the gate of his Pradalunga, staring after his son who has turned away and is striding down towards Bergamo with the gait of a Greek mountaineer. Unspoilt by vice or idleness, he bears the story of his youth on his brow. His only recreation has been climbing and hunting in the mountains. During the battle of Calatafimi he was seen to cover Garibaldi with his cloak so that the General's red shirt should not form a mark for the enemy's rifle-fire. At a doubtful moment of the battle he encouraged those around with inspired words.

Missilmeri, 23 June

General Türr's wound has opened again and he has spat blood. Ever since we entered Palermo this man has worn him-

self to a shadow. His Brigade is very sad because they fear that he will have to leave us. I saw him for an instant, pale, his eyes blue-ringed, his lips bloodless, his chest sunken. Can he really be that second-lieutenant of the Hungarian company who passed through my village in '49 after the battle of Novara? I remember them as though I had them before my eyes now. There were about a hundred tall young men with a great tricolour flag. They were half hidden in the dust that rose from the road, hot under the March sun. '*Eliei! Eliei!*' they cried when they got to the bridge, as people came out to meet them. The second-lieutenant seemed happy in the midst of his men, but I felt a pang as I heard my father say: 'They are Hungarians, and suffer under the Austrians!'

Villafrati, 24 June

They rode proudly past, mounted on black stallions with glittering eyes and flowing manes. They hardly gave us a glance, but held their heads high. Guns were slung over their shoulders, they had pistols and daggers at their belts and ribbons on their hats and harness. I seemed to have seen their leader somewhere before. The villagers chatting with us seemed uncertain whether to greet or ignore them, but I noticed one gave them a wink, another exchanged signs with them; a flexion of the brow, cheek, chin—devilment that serves for their secret communications. 'Who are those seven men?' I asked a gentleman standing by. 'Oh, patriots, sir, didn't you notice, their tricolour favours?' Another glanced at him with a quick frown. Meanwhile the seven horsemen had reached the edge of the village and set off at a steady trot.

Suddenly a lieutenant came out from General Türr's headquarters and spurred to overtake them. He soon brought them back. We noticed their mocking, self-possessed, haughty, air. The lieutenant had put his pistol to their leader's temple ready to shoot if they disobeyed. . . .

We crowded into the house where there was great hubbub. We could hear General Türr's voice raised in anger as he uttered the name 'Santo Mele'. 'Santo Mele?' I said. 'Why,

he's the brigand we had in irons at the Passo di Renna and who managed to escape. He's a blood-thirsty murderer and thief!'

At this the gentleman who had spoken up for the seven slid off without so much as a 'by your leave'.

We heard whispering. A summary Council of War! Major Spangano appeared and is to preside over the Council. He is an elderly man with hair and beard already grizzled; he served as an officer during the defence of Venice.

Villafrati, 26 June

Bassini's battalion has gone off in a hurry. They are hastening to Prizzi, a village near at hand, where people have started to murder and rob as though there were no authority left. Fra' Carmelo knew what he was talking about when he spoke to us at Parco.

'Down in the plain', he said, 'there are great riches, but enjoyed by few and badly distributed; but these poor people up here have to beg for bread. Bread, bread, they cry and I have never heard the like.'

Bassini has marched off, but not so willingly as when he scents danger. This gay grumbler, tough, without frills, has a kind heart that shows in his good-humoured crusty countenance. He's always wagging his cropped grey head, nobbly as a club to beat the enemy with. He must be at least fifty, yet he's younger than any of us, and at Calatafimi held his company together as though at a party. His officers, all Lombard gentlemen, look up to him as to a father. If he finds, on getting to Prizzi that he needs to evoke the law, he has qualified lawyers by the dozen in his battalion; if he needs to make a speech, he can call on plenty of men-of-letters to help him: but he's sharp and to the point, he'll do the talking with his sword! Anyone guilty there had better look out!

Villafrati, 26 June

Not one person has been found willing to tell the truth. The evidence given before the Council of War that told most against Santo Mele was his own.

'I a brigand, Your Excellency? I have simply been fighting against those on the Bourbon side, burnt down the houses of Royalists, executed spies and police. Since early April I have served the revolution. Here are my testimonials!'

Saying this he threw down a bundle of documents, all stamped by the municipal authorities of the places where he had been. They praise him to the skies as though he were a Garibaldi. But the Council did not set him free. His murderous reputation is well-known and when he is taken to Palermo someone will see that he gets a bullet in his skull.⁷

Villafrati, 27 June

Colonel Eber has arrived. He looks half soldier, half poet. They say that he is Hungarian and he came out of Palermo on 26 May to see Garibaldi, then insisted on accompanying us back on that glorious, terrible, day of the 27th. He is a famous traveller and has visited all parts of Asia as *Times* correspondent. Now he is to be our commander, as Türr is at the end of his tether and is leaving as an invalid.

Rocca Palomba, 28 June

What a delicious place for a vigil it is at the foot of this fairy castle. Tired out after an eight-hour march, the men lay sleeping in the fields, so silent that I seemed to be alone.

How is it that this countryside is so deserted? We go for hours without seeing a house. As for peasants, there aren't any! Those who till the fields live in villages as large as our towns. Their houses are dens piled one on another and they sleep there together with their donkeys and other less respectable animals. What a stench and what depravity! At dawn they trudge off to their remote fields and there is hardly time to set to work before they have to return. Poor people! What a life!

Rocca Palomba is similar to all the other villages, but seen from a distance it looks much more promising as it nestles on

⁷ Santo Mele, the brigand, later came before another court in Palermo and was executed.

the mountainside, half hidden in almond orchards, with its gently graded road winding upwards. We found the inhabitants *en fête*. They had sent out a party of horsemen to meet us who advanced waving flags, shouting and calling out 'Welcome, brothers!' They looked like people from the Middle Ages preserved for this very purpose of greeting us. These gentlemen did the honours of the place with such polish that they hardly seemed like people used to a secluded life. But civilized manners are innate. Its always the same story, however; if one village welcomes us, the next seems resentful, the one after that friendly. Here we found priests and town authorities at the gate; the band played, bonfires blazed on the heights and the gentry competed in entertaining our officers, while the soldiers had bread, cheese, wine, kisses, anything they wanted.

Somehow or other I always get billeted on priests! This one wanted me to touch the Bible, but I opened it instead, read a couple of verses and translated them straight from the Latin. Thereupon the priest threw his arms around my neck and called in all the household to meet the great Christian he had in his house. I supped with them. There were women, girls, children, old men, youths, a whole tribe. It was like Christmas and I could hardly get away to my room. What a charming little room it is, with its bed as white as lilies. And I, poor sinner, do I dare get into the purity of these sheets?

Bassini has joined us with his battalion; he, his officers, and men are quite ashamed, for at Prizzi they had a princely welcome. There were illuminations, banquets, dances, and pretty girls who greeted them from afar with cries of 'Bless you! Bless you!'

Alia, 29 June

It was only a short march from Rocca Palomba to Alia, through a fertile countryside that stretches from the plain up to the hills all golden with corn, which seemed to bow in the wind as though in homage to our red-clad column.

30 June, 4 a.m.

We're off again and this time have a long march before us and the day promises to be scorching hot. Up and down the dirty streets go the soldiers, but only a few of the citizens are to be seen at the windows, half dressed and quite indifferent to what is going on. Two priests go past on their way to church and they bid us farewell. Ah, the trumpet call! I wonder who composed that fine call to arms of the Piedmontese *Bersaglieri*. Certainly a musician with a gay, bold, nature, for it strikes such a bracing note. Perhaps it was written by Colonel Lamarmora himself. It shakes off sleep and sloth and sets one's nerves a-tingle for action. The Austrians have often heard it, and the Russians in the Crimea, and now we have brought it to the old island of Victor Amedeus⁸ where street boys sing it as their own.

Valle Lunga, 30 June, p.m.

Some friends from Palermo have reached us and they report that men from the ports of Liguria and Tuscany are arriving every day. There has been some trouble owing to the haste with which the Palermitans have been urged to unite with Piedmont; but the Dictator has everything under control.

I am writing in a tiny room and feel like a cricket in a cage. If I look out of the window, however, I can see the whole length of the High Street, filled with a gay concourse of red-clad soldiers. Officers are sitting smoking and drinking in front of company headquarters. How quickly one catches the manners of the local gentry, who spend the whole year laughing and playing cards in an effort to make time pass and escape boredom. As long as the earth brings forth its fruits they can write idylls and tragedies for the ladies. I have listened to wonderful popular rhymed histories of love, of bitter jealousy, or dire revenge. Ordinary people here are all poets.

⁸ Vittorio Amadeo, see note 7, p. 17.

July 1860

Santa Caterina, 1 July

Eber knows how to move troops without tiring them. He divides the march into two parts; we go off in the evening and camp after a considerable distance has been covered. Then we take the road again before dawn and reach our destination some time in the morning before the sun has become too hot. Last night we rested in the fields round Cascina Postale. The weather was fine and the sky so clear that I seemed to see much farther into the heavens than ever before.

By sunrise this morning we had already been on the road for a couple of hours. The companies were singing Lombard and Tuscan folk songs, while Sicilians competed with one of their arias which was deeply touching: *La palombella bianca—Si mangia la racina*. But from time to time the song broke into expressions of hate for the Bourbons and scorn for Queen Sophia.

At the head of the column Genoese were singing Mameli's inspired verses.¹ All of a sudden the song broke off and all stopped singing on arriving at a certain spot. I understood why when I got there. It was the first view of Etna, far, far away, dark and enormous, casting its shadow over half Sicily and the sea beyond, looming gigantic to eye and imagination.

* * *

In the Piazza of Santa Caterina are pitched two tents, over the finer of which hangs the French flag. As I passed I caught sight of a woman within, a lovely girl with sparkling eyes as far as I could see. Stretched out on a gaily coloured rug beside her

¹ Goffredo Mameli (1827-1849), the young soldier poet, who composed the most sung poem of the risorgimento, *Fratelli d'Italia*.

was Alexandre Dumas.² My heart gave a leap! How wonderful to live like that in a desert with the young nun of Palermo, gazing through a tent door at vast horizons, palm trees, a distant caravan of camels; smiling together in the unbroken silence.

So the Three Musketeers played out their adventures under that creole-like mane of hair! They tell me Dumas has a schooner in the Port of Palermo called *Emma*, after the young woman whom I saw. He's come to Sicily with the idea of avenging his father's imprisonment by the old Bourbons when, as a French general, the latter was driven by a storm to the coast of Apulia on returning ill from the Egyptian campaign. They say he is a close friend of Garibaldi and of Colonel Eber whom he met in Asia. He guards his woman most jealously. He only has one servant, dressed as a sailor. Tonight he is dining with the officers and it would be wonderful to be able to listen to him—he has seen and imagined so much!

* * *

Poor Major Bassini has to leave again, as he has been picked to execute justice at a village called Resotano, where some malefactors are intimidating the population. I've learnt confidentially that tonight we have to move on to Caltanissetta where our welcome could easily be gunfire.

Alexandre Dumas has struck his tents and is returning to Palermo. They say he is leaving, after a disagreement with some of our people who cut him short when he spoke of Italians with scant respect.

Caltanissetta, 2 July

These villages and towns slander each other as though they enjoyed it. From what was told us, we should have been met by gunfire in this place. Quite the contrary! We found decora-

² Alexandre Dumas (père), the French novelist, an enthusiastic supporter of the Italian liberation movement, had come to Sicily in search of romance and material for the book he published in 1861, *Les Garibaldiens*. He later edited Garibaldi's Memoirs in French.

tions, flags and greenery put out for us. We had to pass under a triumphal arch, together with the town authorities and the National Guard, who had come to meet us. The boys did their best to be allowed to carry our soldiers' rifles, to relieve them for the last stretch of the way, but this kindly thought was *not* welcomed by the men. Perhaps some of them remembered the early days after we'd landed, when we slept in the open hugging our rifles between our legs, and some even tied them to their bodies for fear of waking up disarmed.

Quite right! There were peasants at that time who, to lay hands on a rifle, were bold enough to steal one from our bivouacs.

3 July

Could that festive welcome of yesterday have been all a pretence? Today the town is quite silent, as though we had ceased to exist. The people go about their business and seem to infer: 'We've done what was expected of us and that's enough.'

* * *

Bassini's men are back, worn out by a long march over fearful roads. They say that they arrived at Resotano around midnight and found the population under arms, determined to prevent their entry. Bassini, quite prepared to get in at the point of the bayonet, acted with circumspection and managed to lay hands on eleven scoundrels, guilty of endless aggressions and murders. One managed to break away, but a Sicilian was after him like a demon, caught him up, and killed him.

5 July

On mustering we find that about fifty of the Sicilians who came with us from Palermo have deserted, some even taking their rifles with them. They are peasants who blaze up like straw and then lose interest. The Council of War condemns them to death. Notices containing death-sentences are stuck up

at all street corners like washing, but they leave the deserters alone, provided they clear right off. The good ones are townsmen and the Palermitans themselves. They are civilized, well-intentioned, respectful young men. Some of the officers, however, who look like clerics, are not much thought of. When the companies go out for drill they march along carrying their swords as though they were tapers. Then they stand on one side as if their presence was sufficient and learning how to drill and handle arms was beneath them. If only they could have been in Piedmont last year! Some of the most aristocratic young men of Italy put up with the roughest usage at the hands of grey-haired corporals who had served at Goito, Novara, and the Crimea, and who shouted stinging insults as they instructed them. Well, they put up with everything in order to learn! I recall a Venetian count loading a cart with stable litter. Corporal Ragni came by carrying a mess-tin.

'Are they all such idiots where you come from? Where did you learn to handle a pitch-fork?' The count replied something in good Italian and smiled.

'Ah, so you're a volunteer? D'you know what this is?'

'A mess-tin.'

'This is what we're fighting for!' jeered the corporal, rapping the tin with his knuckles. The count still smiled.

And the corporal: 'This evening pack up and go on smiling in the cells.'

'Yes, sir!'

Caltanissetta, 7 July

A real festival in fairyland! Garden paths seemed to be all alight, the green of trees and espaliers to shine with a metallic sheen. The women of Caltanissetta, walking together with husbands, brothers, or with us, seemed to form one great family rejoicing over some fortunate event. There were enough refreshments—wine and cakes—to last all the poor in the town for a week. There was dancing and chatting and discussions about liberty and love. And, indeed, some of the Lombards among us are handsome as demi-gods.

Castrogiovanni, 10 July

Why must we march across mountains by tracks such that only by a miracle no one broke his neck? At any rate we have seen a lush countryside looking like a great golden cup. Cattle grazing in the meadows along our way snuffed the air and gazed, startled, at our endless column of red-clad soldiers. A couple of our men who had fallen out of the ranks, perhaps in search of water, were charged by a bull. We saw them rushing up a slope with the infuriated animal's formidable horns right at their backs. One managed to clamber into a tree, the other continued running along a bank where the bull would have got him, had not a herdsman come up at full gallop, bending so low over his horse that his head was right down on the mane. He thrust his pole at the bull's flank like a lancer and the animal fled bellowing, kicking up the turf and furiously lashing his tail.

* * *

I have been thinking that when we were at Gibilrossa six weeks ago, two possibilities were open to us; we could either have attacked Palermo, or retreated to these heights and organized revolution, gathered strength and then carried on the war. Almost all our leaders were for the latter plan, but not so Garibaldi. He wanted Palermo. Perhaps he guessed that once we had retreated up here we should have gradually lost vigour; the revolution would have collapsed and we with it.

* * *

While we were waiting in the street in order to direct the companies to billets, the Venetian blinds of a convent opposite were broken and fragments flew through the air. Young nuns clapped from the barred windows and cried out the name of Garibaldi, or rather Sinibaldo. The name, that I have heard mispronounced in a thousand different ways ever since we landed at Marsala, has now changed to Sinibaldo, the father

of Santa Rosalia who once lived in a hermitage on Mount Pellegrino! Who knows what fantastical notions were in the minds of those ingenuous creatures who looked like the groups of angels our artists paint amid golden clouds, bearing the Virgin Mary up to Heaven. Perhaps they think Garibaldi is really the King, father of the Saint, reborn! Among these imaginative islanders any fantasy can pass for truth. A lady asked me in Palermo, quite seriously, if I had ever seen the angel whose wings shelter Garibaldi against bullets. I replied that I hadn't. I felt like saying, 'But I see her now and should like to kiss her.' It was a piece of gallantry I simply couldn't utter, for the question had been asked with such devotion and the lady was in such a state of exaltation.

Some old Sisters put up a pretence of pulling the young white-clad nuns away from the windows, but they too were enjoying watching us as we stood below, dusty and lusty. Dear, oh dear! What a thing life is, what sweet longings in the human heart! An idea flashed through my mind. In every town there is a monastery for men and a convent for women. Senses swoon under these burning suns. Amid the age-long gloom of these buildings ancient as Faith itself, buildings that give a feeling of things of no beginning and no end, set in the voluptuous rankness of their gardens where trees spread and entwine as if tormented by their own exuberance, desire creeps through every one of a man's senses and overwhelms his spirit, so that, calling on God's mercy, he concedes the flesh its triumph.

When we have gone, liberty will sweep away this medieval residue, but meanwhile, why have priests and friars not come out to fight to the death for those wonderful places where they live? Perhaps the times are now ripe.

* * *

I am writing at the foot of a castle that once dominated the town. It is now a prison where a sergeant of Agesilao Milano's³ company was incarcerated. He was freed by the revolution, but came out white-haired, bowed, finished, without strength

³ Agesilao Milano, see note 4, p. 8.

enough even to rejoice at what was happening to his country. So I was told and so I jot it down. I also record that I can see Lake Pergusa about five miles away. It looks like a piece of sky fallen into the midst of flowery meadows. *Circa Lacus lucique sunt plurimi et laetissimi flores omni tempore anni*, says Cicero speaking of Enna, the ancient city, now Castrogiovanni. I read this passage in the *Verrine* about six years ago. Who would have told me then that I was to see those places with my own eyes?

* * *

Opposite Castrogiovanni stands Calascibetta, secure and sombre on its mountain rent by ravines as though by lightning and apparently made of basalt. Down in the valley is the Misericordia entrepôt,⁴ an ominous name that suggests the blades of highwaymen's daggers shining in the night.

I can see our artillery below, waggons, sentries, and a swarm of red soldiers. There can't be a breath of air down there, while here we have a light breeze that caresses our cheeks so sweetly it might be a breath from those young nuns of this morning.

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News of Bixio! He is leading his brigade through the island to our right. He has seen Parco, Piana de' Greci, Corleone once again and is proceeding in the direction of Girgenti. Our comrades will see the ruins of the temples Byron loved, there in the wastes that cover the bones of a great people. Herdsmen pay little heed to those rows of silent columns and seafarers bow to them from afar.

Leonforte, 11 July

Captain Faustino Tanara, standing solitary on a hilltop, scans the wide horizon with his little eyes like an eaglet studying the best way to launch out on his first flight. His bold, open nature shines in his face, but he never seems completely

⁴ This place the 'Misericordia' sounds ominous to Abba as the lay fraternity of that name in Italy attends the sick and dying and bury the dead.

happy. Yet he should be cheered by observing how fond we all are of him. What a sweet nature he has! He shows affection for the meanest of us, even for Mangiaracina, a Sicilian from some village on Etna, a blockhead with tousled hair like a bear and two eyes that peep out from sunken pits like footpads in ambush. One day I saw Tanara really angry with Mangiaracina, who throws his legs about like a hippopotamus and can't keep step with the company. 'Why have you joined up with us? Surely we can unite Italy without your great carcass!' Mangiaracina's eyes filled with tears and, looking at his officer as though at a saint, he replied humbly and quietly: 'I have feelings too, Captain!' Tanara shook him by the hand.

Mangiaracina is about thirty years old. In battle he is another man. He darts and jumps and tears about as quick as lightning. Then we all admire him and we fear for his safety. Afterwards he creeps glumly into some corner and you can't get a word out of him.

San Filippo D'Argina, 12 July

We left Leonforte in the cool, at two in the morning, and marched slowly until sunrise. Then we all shook ourselves, just as birds do, and our thoughts flew over the great expanses of the island. The usual views; groves of almond trees just as we have chestnuts; land that should produce abundance; every now and then groups of peasants watching us with indifference, and thinking who knows what about us.

San Filippo is a gay little town, and they tell us that from here to the sea the most beautiful part of Sicily is to be found. We arrived just as a procession was entering the church, after having made a round to pray for rain. We saw the tail-end as it slowly went by chanting; nearly all priests in stole and surplice, too many! How do these poor Sicilians provide for them all?

There is a rumour that a column of Royalist troops has come out from Syracuse and is waiting for us near Catania. It must be true because we shall be leaving shortly. Shall we join battle where the Athenians of Nicias fought? Or maybe beneath Mount Etna, where so many dramatic events took place during

the servite wars? And Garibaldi is not with us! If only Bixio could arrive from Girgenti in the thick of the battle like the hurricane he is!

Regalbuto, 13 July

We have been entertained at table, willingly so it appeared, by some thirty Augustinian monks. They did the honours of their monastery dressed in black cassocks, sleek and greasy. The monastery is secluded, a tranquil backwater, a place to grow fat in. The monks are like trees in a garden whose soil drains all the good from the rest of the village.

Doctor Zen, who wasn't in laughing mood today, sat in the pulpit at the end of the refectory and read passages from the lives of the saints. Such gloomy stuff, all mortification and fasting! While we ate and chatted quietly with the monks, the Prior kept his eye on the novices in case they should be led astray and he wake up next morning to find the garden littered with discarded cassocks! But they were courteous to the end and gave us an ancient wine that might have been made when Vittorio Amedeo was king of Sicily. Little by little things warmed up and heads began to spin, and all of us, monks too, began saying so many unseemly things that Zen left the pulpit and went out.

We all left and in the square I saw Nuvolari, an officer of the Scouts, looking glummer than usual. He watched us in silence and perhaps secretly blamed us.

Aderò, 14 July. Afternoon

For the whole march I have been with Telesforo Catoni, whom I have wanted for a friend ever since Marsala. He was in the Cairoli company and used to study law at Pavia. There is something about him that makes one sad; one doesn't know why but feels sorry for him. He has a mane of black hair, large, eloquent, piercing eyes, and a head that should have topped an athlete's body. And, instead, he has slender limbs and a frame that a breath of air would blow away. Yet he has never fallen a yard behind! You can read in his face his essential

purity; no vulgar word ever passes his lips. He is nearly always on his own. He adores the poet Foscolo and knows the *Sepolcri*⁵ by heart and seems to draw spiritual nourishment from it as from a food for lions. Walking next to me, he recited the verses about Marathon and, coming from him in the midst of the column marching through the night, they struck me as the most beautiful and most virile poetry written since the age of Dante.

Catoni is very Foscolian and if his portrait were prefixed to *Ortis* everyone would think that Jacopo must have looked like that. He is nineteen, with a head full of literary projects; he is religious and prays, but hates priests. Nevertheless he too kept guard over friars that the Palermitans wanted to ill-treat. He's a Mantuan like Nuvolari, Gatti, and Boldrini, all courageous men with a touch of eccentricity, rather like Sordello.

As I was walking with Catoni I saw a beautiful woman gazing from the balcony of a superior-looking house. In the blazing heat of the early afternoon her eyes were fixed on some distant cherished prospect. Of what was she dreaming? Perhaps of us. She seemed unhappy.

'Look up there,' I said, 'Pia de' Tolomei.'⁶ Catoni looked and his eyes flashed at that vision of divine beauty, but he turned his head away, saying: 'Don't look, we are in a country where a woman is dearer than life, dearer than liberty.'

When we came out into the open countryside towards Catania, it seemed we were no longer in Sicily, or that what we had thitherto seen, except perhaps for the Conca d'Oro, was not the real Sicily. Gone was that almost savage exuberance of growth and in its place was a regular cultivation. One would almost imagine oneself to be in the fair land of Tuscany,

⁵ Ugo Foscolo (1778-1827) wrote much that inspired later Italian patriots. Here his famous blank-verse poem *Dei Sepolcri* and his romantic epistolary novel *Le Ultime Lettere Di Jacopo Ortis* are mentioned. Foscolo spent the last eleven years of his life in England.

⁶ Pia de Tolomei, mentioned by Dante (*Purgatorio* V, vv. 124-136) as an innocent wife left to pine. She was finally killed by her husband.

were it not for the huge ox-horns fixed to chimneys, copings, and even straw-stacks, as protection against the powers of evil.

Paternò, 14 July

From Adernò to Paternò we marched in full view of Mount Etna and we never once lost it from sight after reaching Santa Caterina. Along the lower slopes, that seem to rise up to infinite distances, are majestic woods of dark green. Thence the great mountain rears up, bare and arid as far as the snow-covered peak, topped by a plume of smoke rising sluggishly from the crater as though it could climb no higher. The giant sleeps and marks the passing years by his own furious eruptions and the peoples he has destroyed. There have been many of these and what annals have been theirs! And yet there are still numerous villages up there in the scrub and, from afar, one senses the inhabitants are prosperous.

Catania, 15 July

I thought I was entering a city of the Cyclops, but once past its menacing gate, built of massive blocks, one finds a broad street stretching all the way to the sea. It was as clean and sweet as though awaiting a Corpus Christi day procession. We were a small vanguard in front of the brigade and so were pelted with the first flowers. In the Piazza dell' Elefante, a sentry called out the guard and ten or a dozen youths tumbled out and presented arms, looking fierce. They are men from the district around, recruited by Nicola Fabrizi.

* * *

The brigade marched in. Eber rode at the head and the companies strode out well with a rhythmic step and their rifles were sloped in good order as though they were veterans. It was a pleasure to see them.

We shall rest here for some days. The Bourbon troops have not stirred from Syracuse and Augusta, but we have to be on our guard because we are between them and those at Messina.

17 July

I understand now that, for us, this period of inaction is a Capuan idyll of indolence. There are certain scents in Catania that lull you to sleep. The town lies like Venus in a shell, swooning in sky, landscape, and ocean that seem to blend into one living entity for its delight. One feels a sweet breath of Anacreontic air; bring wine, bring roses! As women come out of the churches like so many Goddesses, their eyes sparkle and hips sway under white dresses, while black silk mantillas ripple down over their shoulders from coiled hair. We gaze at them, drinking in the enchantment, lost in admiration.

20 July

Before dawn this morning we were down on the sea-shore. I was very upset. Two men had to be executed; one a Sicilian volunteer who had murdered a comrade out of jealousy, the other a villain who had strangled his old mother and children to clear his hovel for another wife. The latter howled all the way from prison to place of execution, the former smoked with a smile on his arrogant face. In the pale dawn light, while land and sea seemed to arise from their nocturnal embrace, twelve shots rang out and two men were launched into the next world.

* * *

The Benedictines of Catania, some of the highest born gentlemen of Sicily, seem to live in the antechamber to Paradise itself. I said this in joke to one of them, and he opened wide his arms, cast up his eyes and sighed: 'As befits poor monks.' Can he have said this in mockery? Ah! the parable of the camel and the needle's eye!

We enjoyed peaches from the monastery gardens, steeped in sherry wine. The watchful monks wouldn't let us drink this wine, 'spoiled' as they called it, but poured out fresh, limpid as amber and richly scented.

22 July

Now for a curious tale! Among the Sicilians who joined up with us as we passed through the island several young women have been discovered. They were wearing red shirts in the most self-possessed way and nobody knew anything about them, except their particular gallants. They have been taken away with all respect and will be sent back home. Who knows what welcome they will receive when they get there, these gypsies of love!

* * *

I have just met Pittaluga in Via Etnea. I had not come across him since Talamone, nor did I know he was one of the sixty men sent into the Papal States under Zambianchi.⁷ He tells an extraordinary story! The first evening they camped on the frontier. A man is missing, Stoppani from Terracina. Where can he be? About eleven o'clock a sentry hears galloping in the dark.

'Halt! Who goes there?'

'Don't make a row, it's me!' And Stoppani leaps from a horse and comes in with a grin on his face.

'What's happened?' And Stoppani:

'I knew the Papal dragoons had fine horses, so I've laid out the owner of this one; he's dead or dying.'

Three or four of us ran to look for the wounded man, but only found bloodstains. Perhaps the dragoon had managed to drag himself away or his comrades had rescued him. Next day, however, a squadron of them attacked us without warning, but our men, who were caught in the streets of Grotte, fought well and got away. But there is a sad tale to tell—that Zambianchi! And to think that he had first-class people under him—Guerzoni, Leardi, Soncini, Bandini, Fochi, Ferrari, Ughi, Pittaluga! Did you ever hear the like?

⁷ Callimaco Zambianchi was put in charge of a party detached at Talamone to invade the Papal States. The so-called 'diversion' is considered as one of Garibaldi's mistakes, both from a political and military point of view. Zambianchi himself was unworthy of command, as Abba infers here.

Victor Emmanuel's grenadiers arrived after that and took the whole company prisoner. They were escorted to Genoa where they at once took ship with Clemente Corte. Next they were captured at sea by Bourbon ships and held a month at Gaeta. Liberated, they were shipped back to Genoa instead of to Sicily—a long Odyssey! Yet they never gave up. They were determined to come, and by one way or another, have all joined up with us.

* * *

Where is the place? What is Milazzo?⁸ I've gone to look at the map. There it is between Cefalù and the lighthouse, a thin tongue of land sticking out into the sea like a flickering flame.

From today I shall never imagine that strip of dark land with its castle, as they describe it, without a vision of lines of red-clad soldiers percolating like streams of blood through the green of prickly pears, cane-brakes and dry beds of torrents, as far as the blazing white sea-shore. I seem to see the austere faces of Medici, Cosenz, and Fabrizi as they hurry to and fro; I don't know them, but I know what heroes look like, and the kind of men Garibaldi moulds. Then I see a party of Neapolitan horse galloping like madmen through our men. Where are they going? Whom are they seeking? They form a ring around Garibaldi, who is on foot. He is surrounded by threatening swords and lances. A ferocious yell of triumph from Royalist throats echoes to the farthest corners of the field. Ah! This is the moment when Queen Sophia's crown can be saved for her. But Missori and Statella appreciate that this is the rôle they are destined to play in the great epic. Death spits from the Lombard's pistol and sweeps out from the sword wielded by the paladin from Syracuse. The miracle happens! Fly, ye lancers! Your captain, as he led you out from Messina promised you the Lion's head, but now you will see that captain no more. He has fallen from his horse transfixed by the

⁸ Abba himself did not take part in the battle of Milazzo and the following imaginative description is based on hear-say and appears to be material for poetry—obviously no part of a diary.

Dictator's sword. He lies in the dust! Now Garibaldi, with his seaman's instinct, has boarded the *Veloce* and taken to the waves, and thunders from her deck his new contribution to the battle.

The poem ends with the tale of the old castle; with the fugitives seeking safety there; with Bosco, unavailing hero, leaving under truce, with his horse and sword granted by Garibaldi. The *Veloce* that had come to our aid as though inspired by the spirit of the dead Magyar hero who fell at the Termini Gate, will be re-named *Tuköry*.

Catania, 24 July

The foreign *Wolf* company⁹ is leaving. It moves off towards Taormina led by Captain Giulio Adamoli, a young Lombard, courteous and dashing. They go to see if Bourbon troops have left Messina to challenge us. The brigade leaves tomorrow.

27 July

In they came, dusty but radiant, with their band in front playing martial music. Bixio was riding a glossy coal-black stallion that danced under him as light as a swallow. His dark face, framed by a white hood, gave him the appearance of an Emir returning from some mysterious desert foray. He wheeled gracefully round with the officers behind him and came to a halt in front of the stone elephant that seems to drowse in the square. He rapped out a command and ranks divided, battalions turned smartly about and came to a halt in perfect column order. They carried out the movement like one man. This really is a regiment to win veterans' respect. I have spoken with friends and they tell me that Bixio gave them no rest as they crossed the island. More than once the soldiers were on the point of mutiny, in protest at the forced marches. But who would dare be the first to oppose this man, who never eats, sleeps, or stops?

⁹ The *Wolf* company was formed from foreign deserters from the Royalist army. It was named after its Bavarian commander.

I don't know why but, as he rode into Catania, Bixio looked ill-content. His habitual frown seemed deeper than usual. It may be that he is not in accord with the captain riding beside him, who must be his chief-of-staff. This officer rides with dangling legs, but he has a back like a ramrod. He has wispy hair as pale as his complexion, and looks as though he were about to fall asleep. Under his ragged, drooping, moustache his lips always have a mocking smile. He seems listening to mysterious sounds from far away. They tell me that he is a brilliant man, originally of the Piedmontese army. He was a second-lieutenant of *Bersaglieri* since 1848, but when the Milan riots of '53 occurred, resigned for patriotic reasons. I notice that everyone seems to hold aloof from him. A good man in action, but so satirical that his words can scorch and wound. He would even mock Garibaldi himself. His name is Giovanni Turbiglio and I call him Mephistopheles in a red shirt.

Giardini, 28 July

Acireale, Giarre, Giardini, are three little towns for which the sea and the volcano seem to compete. Etna drags them to her foot like three slaves. However far one goes the mountain is always there with constantly changing aspect. As we march under the blazing sun on roads yellow with lava dust that shimmers like a fiery curtain before us with almost palpable heat, our eyes seek the relief of foothills lying in cool shade.

To our right as far as the eye can reach is blue sea, quite unlike the waters of Liguria or those of Marsala. It is the same lovely sea, but here it has a deep remote transparency, as though there were deeps on deeps, one beyond the other, like Dante's successive heavens. Perhaps the sea experiences a sense of pleasure as the sun penetrates its depths, for in this noon-day hour it has an air of infinite benevolence. I almost dare say that you could walk over it dry-shod. As I gaze I am overcome with the exquisite sweetness of childhood memories, of things heard about the skies, the lakes, and the good people of Galilee.

Far away, beyond the ultimate horizon that, seen from elsewhere, seems in fancy to end in a fearful precipice, one can guess at other lands like Sicily, yet more beautiful. Greece must be yonder; it could be nowhere else! On the air, over the waters, comes a waft of antiquity, and a music sweet today as when Virgil sang of the love of Alphaeus and Arethusa.

* * *

Sant' Alessio is a little fort, built in ancient days to give the Barbary pirates something to laugh about. No guard is kept now, but an old cannon sticking out of its loop-hole seemed to wink at us. As we passed under the fort, Raveggi said to me:

'There's my dream! To be at least forty years old and posted there with four decrepit old soldiers. I'd lie stretched out, first on one glacis then on another, staring at the sea with close attention. There I should grow old little by little, sipping my life, sipping wine, and enjoying fantastical conceits of my own invention.'

* * *

On the sea-shore

I can begin to make out quite clearly the cape of Spartivento. When, as boys, we used to recite the verses *Dall' Alpe a Spartivento* I could imagine these blue waters. I seemed to conjure them up as though breathing their very atmosphere. But now I should hesitate to try to describe the variation of blues; nuances of tint as numerous as the little headlands from here to Messina. Those lines beyond the Straits that look like quivers in the air, can they be the mountains of fabled Calabria, land where death has always met any armed invader who set foot on its shore?

To and fro through the Straits pass the Neapolitan ships of war. Silent, solemn, puffing smoke, they look gloomy. That's our problem, to get over to the opposite shore! But Garibaldi lives!

Messina, 28 July

On the plain of Terranova, between town and citadel, are two sentry-beats, ours and the enemy's. Between the lines is neutral ground, a bare twenty paces wide. Sentries watch each other, start chatting, continue the discussion, and then one of two things happens; either the Bourbon soldier turns sulky, or suddenly throws off cap, equipment, and everything else, shouts *Viva l'Italia!* and makes a dash for our lines. There the deserter is heartily embraced by a mob of women fruitsellers and fish-hawkers. But sometimes our men tempt in vain and rude things are said. Some of the Bourbon soldiers then let fly with their rifles and our men reply. General alarm! Drums roll and bugles blow, both on our side and in the citadel. Gunners' heads pop up on the bastions and one can see their fuses smoking. Then a staff officer runs up from our side and a Bourbon of similar rank appears from the citadel. They meet, speak, shake hands, turn about and the incident is closed. Little comedies that raise a laugh, but which can be serious enough for someone or other! This morning the citadel even fired a cannon-shot! The enormous ball passed clean through a customs shed and went rolling far down the quay. Our men came running up from all sides furious, and I even saw a young man without a leg leaping along with his wooden one as fast as anyone. He was brandishing a rifle with bayonet fixed and yelling that it was time to attack the citadel.

Messina. Returning from Torre del Faro, 28 July

It's a delicious walk to the Torre del Faro. First, one finds very neat little villages, then a sandy plain all the way to where a white tower leaps to the eye above a cluster of miserable hovels. There is little vegetation round about, but sea shimmers in the background and, beyond, are distances only to be penetrated by the imagination, if one has any.

In front of the Torre del Faro, on the other side of the Straits, the eye is caught by a strip of dark green at the foot of the mountains. The mountains themselves seem straining forward

to topple over and fill up the watery gulf between the two shores. Here and there the green is broken by villages shining white in the sun. Men are moving along the beach. Up and down a road that must lead to Reggio one can see the glint of arms from marching troops. Out at sea the patrolling warships keep watch on what is going on on our side, namely digging and shovelling, to prepare gun-emplacements. And what guns! Among the scrap-iron I recognized the culverin we brought away from Orbetello. There she sits in the battery, sticking out her green neck most flirtatiously from her emplacement-coop. One fine day we shall see her wheeling round in display like a turkey. She could tell a tale! If the gunners who now guard and polish her only knew the things we said about her as we marched from Marsala to Piana de' Greci, they'd throw her into the sea.

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Garibaldi is shut up in a miserable little room in the tower roof, while all round Genoese Sharpshooters are camped. These are no longer the forty men of Calatafimi, a company unbeaten for daring, devotion to duty, and all military virtues, but they have formed the nucleus of the battalion that stormed ahead at Milazzo and held all the ground they captured. Now they are not even all Ligurians, as their ranks have been opened to admit young men from all parts of Italy. Five or six survivors from the Sapri massacre who volunteered to wear uniform again no sooner liberated from the dens of Favignana, have been incorporated into the battalion and brought with them something of Pisacane's great inspiration.

August 1860

Fiumara della Guardia, 9 August

Last night, after complete darkness had fallen, twenty boats left the Torre del Faro shore, steering for Calabria. Each carried ten or twelve armed men and, standing up in the last boat, was Garibaldi. They went away into the silent Straits and were soon lost to view. Bourbon warships had been cruising up and down opposite till evening. Then some of them had stationed themselves behind the Sicilian promontory in that vaporous shadow where, when I saw it from here by day, it reminded me of my peaceful childhood dreams. Two of them, however, had remained in mid-channel. Our men, crowded on the shore, waited in trepidation, expecting to hear at any moment the cries of our drowning comrades and perhaps see flashes from the enemy ships out in the Straits. But towards eleven o'clock the fort at Scilla flashed out and the rumble of a cannon shot roused all the camps along both shores. Then we could hear rifle-fire from out of the dark distance. And then silence, as when the lid of a tomb is lowered.

* * *

Now we know what happened. When the boats had got half-way across, Garibaldi, having assured himself that there was no danger from warships, let them proceed, one rigged with a lateen sail as pilot-boat. Then he returned here. In the boats were Alberto Mario, Missori, Nullo, Curzio, and Salomone, the flower of our people, with two hundred picked volunteers under the command of Captain Racchetti of Sacchi's brigade. Leader of the expedition was Mussolino from Pizzo.

Two of the boatmen who were with them told me the tale and trembled as they told it. On realizing what a risky enterprise was afoot they stopped rowing. But forced to go on, proceeded with those dare-devils, weeping and crying on Mary

and the Saints to protect them. Some boats got detached in the dark and went off course towards Scilla. The Neapolitans, on spotting them from the fort, fired that cursed shot, precisely when the main body was reaching the agreed spot near another fort, that of Torre Cavallo, and was disembarking ladders, ropes, and all sorts of gear to help them clamber up. There was some confusion and the boats stood off quickly, leaving our men on a hostile shore, in darkness, without a guide and engaged with the Neapolitan patrols from the fort.

* * *

Our brigade came here to be ferried across to Calabria, had last night's operation been successful. We are encamped in the shingly bed of a dried-up torrent at the mouth of a well-cultivated, little valley. No one has moved a stone to make himself more comfortable in camp by those little improvements which soldiers contrive when they know they will be making a stay. We all consider ourselves birds on the bough, ready to fly off.

Fiumara della Guardia, 10 August

Between us and three hundred of our men are sea, warships, and Bourbon troops on the opposite shore.

There they are yonder, somewhere in that pale green patch high on the mountainside above Villa San Giovanni, but farther along. We see smoke rising, spreading, thickening; we hear muffled rifle shots. One can guess that our men are defending themselves against attacks and must be proud to be fighting, only three hundred, in view of every regiment encamped on this shore from Messina to the Faro.

* * *

I had a sudden flash of intuition. This longing for Sicily that has fascinated me for so long, filling my imagination with delight and my heart with strange pangs; this certainty that here, in this island, I should meet a friend I had long loved, although whom I had no idea; all this came from having read,

years ago, the novel *Dottor' Antonio*¹ by Giovanni Ruffini. I have just realized this on hearing someone mention the book which once so kindled my imagination that I seemed lifted up on wings for days after I had read it. I all but went down on my knees in the sand to offer up thanks with clasped hands to the author who, from England, revealed to Italy this island and this people, no matter whether as it is or as it will be.

11 August

A parade of officers! That stocky Colonel who jerks his head up and down, walking as though he were threatening someone in front of him, is an Englishman. His name is Peard and he is a crack shot. He has no command but sticks close to the unit that is nearest to the enemy. He carries his fifty years as we do our twenty. He wages war as though he loved it and, in action, shoots as though out for tigers. He loves Italy. There is another who rather resembles him, a Major Speech, artist and soldier. He has shed blood whenever men have been fighting for liberty, in Italy and elsewhere. He has never been under fire without being wounded, the last time at Milazzo. Garibaldi loves him like a brother. They've been together all over the world, ever since the days of the Roman republic, their eyes ever fixed in hope on the goddess Liberty.²

The man with the full beard who walks somewhat bowed, dressed in black, is De Flotte. He was marching beside Speech and they were chatting like old friends. De Flotte is one of those people whose air of serene sadness, permeating his whole being, leads one to guess at his history. In imagination one sees the cross under whose weight he walks. When the *coup d'état* took place in Paris he was a people's deputy and he remained there as long as resistance lasted, then he went into

¹ Giovanni Ruffini (1807-1881) wrote the novel *Doctor Antonio* in English, while an exile in England. The protagonist of the book is himself a Sicilian exile and there is much about Sicily in it.

² For the English fighting with Garibaldi see Professor Trevelyan's books and in particular for Peard, his 'War-Journals of Garibaldi's Englishmen', *Cornhill Magazine*, June, 1908.

exile. I think he was a naval officer. Here he is only an individual who wishes us well, who has answered the call of Italy, like the Poles, Hungarians, and all the generous spirits of other nationalities who have brought us the aid of their glorious swords.

I saw Nicola Fabrizi, who looks like a Biblical warrior. Should this man appear at a congress of kings to demand justice for Italy, the kings would rise to their feet out of respect for the people who could produce such a worthy representative. Simple in manners, never put out, he seems to spread an aura of benevolence around him. If he goes by, one longs to follow, sure of going towards some worthy goal. If, at a desperate moment with his very life at stake, some child should clasp his legs, Fabrizi would bend down to caress him. He has persevered ever since the days of *Ciro Menotti*.³ His faith has grown day by day. He has never looked back, age has not disillusioned him; he has always felt certain of witnessing Italy's great moment. Now one begins to understand how Garibaldi could undertake this enterprise. It is known that Fabrizi from Malta, Crispi and Bixio in Genoa, all three impressed on him that Italy must be made this very year, or perhaps never.

* * *

I have come across Major Vincenzo Statella again. His natural look of fierceness has been increased by a cut across his nose. A Hungarian officer was trotting along from the Torre del Faro, bearing orders from Garibaldi. At one point he stopped below a battery and asked something of Statella, who was up there. Statella either paid no attention or did not understand. The Hungarian began to shout and Statella to get angry. Before you could say Jack Robinson a duel had been arranged on the spot and sabre strokes were exchanged. Statella was wounded and the Hungarian went on about his business.

When Garibaldi reached Palermo, this Statella, scion of a

³ *Ciro Menotti*, a Modenese patriot who was executed in 1831.

family of princes, whose father was one of the oldest and most faithful generals in the Bourbon army, rushed to embrace the man who had come to liberate Sicily and had been his captain in '49. Who would have guessed it? He is a Syracusan. His high lineage is written in his face, and as for his valour—ask the Bourbon lancers who got away from him and Missori at Milazzo!

15 August

The *Veloce*, in '48 a warship of the Sicilian revolutionaries, later captured by the Bourbons, has now been brought back to the side of the revolution by a certain Anguissola and renamed *Tuköry*. She did yeoman service at Milazzo, and the other night Piola, an officer of the Sardinian navy, took her on an adventure that, had it only succeeded . . . ! The plan was to go as far as Castellamare, capture an eighty-gun Bourbon ship called the *Monarca*, tow her over and make use of her at the Faro as a floating fort. The *Tuköry* reached Castellamare without opposition. It was midnight and the *Monarca* towered up like a giant, a black bulk over the sea. The thing seemed done! Some of our *Bersaglieri* from Bonnet's battalion got into boats to cut the *Monarca's* cables, others were boarding her, when all of a sudden the alarm was given, there were bugle calls, drums, and the entire garrison of Castellamare opened fire with shot and shell. The attempt had to be abandoned. The *Tuköry's* commander thought it better not to risk being hit, and retreated, but in his own good time like Ajax, leaving the Neapolitans firing into the darkness.

* * *

There is an air of mystery about, emanating presumably from some cave or other. Garibaldi has not been seen for several days. Some say he has gone away, and some that he is shut up in the Torre del Faro. He is just like Conrad of Byron's *Corsair*, or he would be, if there were a Gulnara! Talking of Gulnara, I observed an officer of Scouts walking with rapid steps along the beach, without a sabre, obviously a woman, hips, bust, and

all. She was a handsome creature, and had adopted an innocent air, but kept on casting snaky glances behind her from the tail of her eye. The brigade officers were discussing her, and Colonel Bassini grumbled in her wake, shaking his head and switching his whip. She's a Piedmontese countess who's come adventuring. They say she scatters the balm of charity around her like a sister of mercy. On the other hand, old Doctor Ripari had her chased out of the Barcellona hospital where she was playing the angel with the wounded from Milazzo.

* * *

I've just made a quick trip to Giardini. I treasure such pleasant memories of that coast and its little towns. *En route* I came across lots of friends from Bixio's brigade. They've all caught something of him in their manner, their speech, even in the way they look at you. This general seems made to fit the times and ourselves. He takes men and moulds them as he wants them. With him, it is either do as he says or be flung aside. A look or a word is not enough with him, he is quite prepared to strike out with his sabre, and this is the sole defect in his character. They all grumble; from time to time his volunteers want to leave him. He's violent, insupportable! 'All right, whom do you want to serve under?' 'What do you say? Well if that's the way of it, under Bixio!' Indeed there are not thirty like him in the whole of Italy. If he were struck down by a bullet, it would be as though our strength had suddenly been halved. If the Bourbons had an officer like Bixio, perhaps . . . But no! stifle the thought! They say Bosco is of equal value. Heresy!

Bixio in a few days has raged like a tiger through the villages of Etna, where terrible rioting had broken out. He was seen in one place after another as an apparition of terror. At Bronte there had been division of property, arson, vendettas, fearful orgies, and, to cap all, cheers for Garibaldi! Bixio takes a couple of battalions and transports them up there on horseback, in carriages, in carts, by every means, to reach the place. As they go they keep meeting people who had escaped from

the massacres. They stretch out their arms, supplicating him and his officers, some trying to dissuade them from going to be massacred too. For two days Bixio presses on and the road is strewn with exhausted men who can't stand the pace. At last he arrives with a small party. A most horrible sight meets their eyes and they feel like plucking them out so as not to see. Houses burnt down with the occupants inside; people with throats cut lying in the streets; pupils in seminaries massacred in the presence of their old Rector! One of the savage crew is tearing with his teeth at the breast of a dead girl. 'Charge with the bayonet!' The inhuman villains are taken and bound, but in such numbers that it is hard to pick out the worst of them, about a hundred. Bixio then issues a furiously indignant proclamation:

'Bronte is guilty of crimes against humanity and declared to be in a state of siege. All arms are to be given up on pain of death. The Town Council, the National Guard, and all other organized bodies are dismissed! Until order be restored a war tax to be levied.'

The guilty are to be judged by a Council of War. Six of them are to be executed, shot in the back together with the lawyer Lombardi, an old man of sixty, who had been the leader of the horrid outburst. Among those who carried out the sentence were cultured, gentle, young men in red shirts; doctors, artists, and the like. What a tragedy! Bixio was present with eyes full of tears.

After Bronte; Randazzo, Castiglione, Regalbuto, Centorbi, and other villages; all felt the weight of Bixio's powerful hand. They called him a savage brute, but they dared not do more. However far the fortunes of war take us away, the terror of witnessing this man's tempestuous wrath will suffice to keep the population of Etna quiet. If not, this is what he has written: 'We don't waste words; either you keep orderly and quiet or, in the name of Justice and Country, we'll destroy you as enemies of humanity.'

There are people yet living who remember a rising in those hill villages forty years ago. A General Costa went there with

three thousand soldiers and four guns, but had to leave without achieving anything.

At the end of the last century the title of Duke of Bronte was conferred on Nelson. And what title shall we give to Bixio? Not the one that belonged to the man who murdered Caracciolo!⁴

Messina, 18 August

Garibaldi is no longer at the Torre del Faro, neither in Messina, nor in Sicily! Everyone feels there is something missing in the air, in nature, in us. No one, however, dares to speak of it, nor inquire what has happened to him. We fear, it seems, a shattering reply from the General himself: 'What is it *you* want to know?'

Meanwhile one hears startling rumours. They speak of the French Emperor and of Victor Emmanuel and of a certain letter written by the latter ordering Garibaldi to desist from all further action against the King of Naples. 'Camouflage to keep Europe guessing,' says one; 'Let people write and read what they please,' says another, 'one of these fine nights we shall cross the Straits.'

But those who would prefer to act sooner even say that Vittorio would do better to send Persano with the *Governolo* and the *Maria Adelaide* to take station in mid-channel and clear the way for our crossing.

20 August, morning

Gunfire from the sea down towards Capo dell' Armi. What poetical names! But what anxiety in thinking that every shot may snuff out many men's lives and, among them, friends we

⁴ Italians have never forgotten an episode in Nelson's history when in 1799 he was, through his connexion with the Bourbon King and Queen, associated with the reprisals taken against those who had organized the shortlived *Repubblica Partenopea*. In particular they consider him guilty of the execution of Admiral Caracciolo. Abba remembers here the account given in Colletta's *Storia del Reame di Napoli* he had studied at school. See also p. 132.

shall see no more. People arriving here from Catania say that two ships sailed into Giardini during the night and that all Bixio's men have embarked; but they know nothing further.

Bixio is in Calabria, Bixio! And Garibaldi too! Once again this man has appeared unexpectedly on an enemy coast. Sometimes he seems more than a living being or is he an archangel who spreads his wings and whirls his sword like a sun-ray? Marsala and Melito, two place-names, two landings; Garibaldi and Bixio twice covered with glory! And here are we left behind and would willingly throw ourselves into the sea and reach them by swimming. Never before have I felt so strongly the aching longing which Virgil expressed when describing the spirits in his sixth Canto:

*Stabant orantes primi transmittere cursum
tendebant manus ripae ulterioris amore.*

The romanticism that Garibaldi has introduced into the art of war has not caused me to forget the classical charm of Virgil, so that on thinking of the effect produced on the Neapolitan Court at the news that Garibaldi was in Calabria and that the din of arms was growing louder, I caught a solemn echo from the passage in the *Aeneid* where all the palace is described as in dire distress. To think of Queen Sophia! What anguish for her! One can understand how the gallant, handsome, General Bosco was captivated by her plight and that, after Milazzo, he has dedicated himself to her service. But Garibaldi, as though he had foreseen it all, has bound him by the terms of his surrender to remain out of the field for six months. And Francis II? Why doesn't he mount his horse and make a stand at the Monteleone Pass? That is what he should do! Perish there, or hurl us back to drown in these waters that we now so long to cross.

22 August. At the Faro

At the moment I think I can feel most deeply and completely the sentiment expressed by Manzoni in the verses:

*Eternal regret for him who, sighing, says, 'I was not there'.*⁵ It is a kind of suffering, an exquisite pain, like no other. Our men are over on the other side, they have been in action—and we were not with them!

Oh my old school-master,⁶ Oh Calasanziano friar, I wonder what you are doing at this instant there in your cell, from which, in the great explosion of '48 that we boys scarcely felt, your poet's soul burst forth with patriotic fervour. You nearly died of grief, when on that terrible day of 1849 you informed your scholars from the dais: 'We have been beaten at Novara.'

The elder boys told us that as our teacher said this he fell in a faint. We used to see him as he strode rapidly along the school corridors in his usual agitated way, with his lofty brow, his white locks flying loose, and his eyes fixed on some world which he alone could see. We felt quite overcome and thought of the figure of Sordello,⁷ whose humanity, strength, and righteous indignation he had impressed on us as he read us Dante.

He it was, worthy friar, who recited to us in school, in the year 1853, the ode: *Halted on the arid river bank*. He did not tell us who wrote it, but promised to send the boy who guessed the name of the author to the top of the class. But we all guessed right! Had we not already read the chorus from *Carmagnola*?

The last verses of that ode and the tone with which our teacher read them, come back to me now: *Dovrà dir sospirando: io non v'era*—I was not there! Seven or eight of his old pupils, who are now here, perhaps turn their thoughts to him. It may be that he remembers how he made us furious with indignation when he read us, in Colletta's history, the account of the death of Caracciolo and about the Neapolitan massacres of

⁵ A quotation from Manzoni's ode *Marzo 1821* expressing a not dissimilar feeling to that in the verses of Virgil quoted above. The opening verse 'Halted on the arid river bank' is quoted below.

⁶ For Abba's school-master see *Introduction*, p. xi.

⁷ Sordello in Dante (*Purgatorio* VI and VII) is depicted as one who loved his country and countrymen and gives rise to a diatribe against Dante's unworthy contemporaries. Sordello was a Mantuan who distinguished himself as a poet in the Provençal language.

1799. Perhaps he claims that it is he who prepared us to fight in this Sicilian war!

25 August. On the shore by the Faro

On the opposite shore, at Bagnara in Calabria there has been a sad incident. When Cosenz's men were disembarking under fire from the Neapolitan troops of General Briganti, De Flotte, in the red shirt as one of Garibaldi's colonels, fell dead. They say that as he was getting into the boat at the Faro, Major Speech wanted to give him a revolver, but he, smiling and thanking, refused to accept it. Directly he fired a shot, he said, someone else would kill him. So he wanted to face the foe like that old hero in the *Henriade*, who charged into the thick of the fray, ready to be killed, but not to kill. De Flotte has died, but Garibaldi has immortalized him for the glory of France and of humanity, in an Order of the Day with words worth more than any life.

De Flotte will sleep in the poetic land of Calabria which now belongs to him rather than to us. His name will be heard as long as the war lasts, for they say that the company of two hundred and fifty Frenchmen, who have come to lend us the aid of their valour, will be known by his name.

26 August. By the sign of a star

The dispositions as follows: General Briganti's brigade is in the low-lying ground and along the shore, while our men are on the heights like spectators on the stepped terraces of an ancient theatre. If the Neapolitans don't capitulate, all our forces will charge down on them and thrust them into the sea to perish. Everyone is waiting. It is night. Garibaldi, who wants to finish it before dawn, is at an advance post.

'Lieutenant, have you a watch?'

'No, General.'

'No matter, lie down here, like this, look at that star, the brightest one over there: and look at this tree. When the star is hidden by the top of the tree it will be two o'clock. Then rouse up and call the men to arms.'

So with the simplicity of a shepherd king, or shall we say with the elegance of a hero from the pages of Xenophon, or perhaps better still—like himself, when young, in the virgin forests of Rio Grande, Garibaldi set the hour by a star.

But, after all, there was no need for an assault. It is said that General Briganti had an interview with Garibaldi and they agreed on a cease-fire. I have had the meeting described to me. What a sight it must have been, the whole brigade reduced to impotence and all those soldiers disbanded. I did not see them myself, but I rejoice. It must have been a heart-breaking business.

27 August

More news! This is like the month of March when ice is breaking up and currents carry it away in huge pieces. General Melendez and his brigade have been encircled by our men and he has gone off after disbanding his troops. The Bourbon commanders are washing their hands of all responsibility, one after the other, according to the rumours that come in thick and fast; there's no discipline, everything is disintegrating. The fact is that the Royal Palace is full of cravens and the revolution has put the army in an impossible position.

* * *

I hear that the day before yesterday General Briganti was making his way all alone on horseback towards some unknown destination, to do who knows what, when he ran into the 15th Neapolitan regiment encamped at Mileto. There were cries of 'Down with the traitor!' So he dismounted and walked into the midst of the soldiers. They were held by his senile dignity and the calmness in his face, but a drum-major rushed at him with his staff and the point went right through and killed him. Others say he was killed by a shot at point blank range.

When we, in our turn, traverse that tragic neighbourhood, I shall feel the air still shuddering at that foul deed. Tragedy haunts these Calabrian mountain crags. Near that spot the Romeos were killed, and not far away is the Angitola Pass

where Mussolino's men and the Calabrians fell in '48. And then there is the whole story of the French followers of King Joseph and King Joachim . . . and surely Joachim's tragic ghost must haunt the castle of Pizzo down there.⁸

I can't get that unfortunate General Briganti out of my mind. I have heard that when Garibaldi entered Palermo by the Termini Gate he was in command of the Castellamare fort and he could hardly bring himself to order the city to be bombarded. The rumour goes that there was a son of his among the officers, but of a quite different temper. What mysteries lie hidden under a soldier's uniform when tyrants rule and, between throne and army, a country groans.

30 August

About a hundred of us are sailing in the *Carmel*, a French packet steamer hailing from Syrian ports. We were picked up at Messina, nearly all wounded or sick, going home on leave. Among us is Medici from Bergamo, half mad with homesickness, who threatens to kill the captain because the ship doesn't go as fast as he would like. On the quarter-deck are ladies, who create a sweet atmosphere of spring. Two lovely girls from Catania are dreams.

They all seem happy except a tall handsome grey-haired Frenchwoman, about fifty. According to a French infantry captain, she has come from Syria, as he has, where she went to visit the grave of her son, a second lieutenant who died there. The captain speaks of the Lebanon Christians and of the French forces in those parts. He seems almost to resent our own war because it deflects attention from that lovely poetical part of the Near East. But aren't the Calabrians, indeed all in the kingdom of the two Sicilies, Christians too, and suffering there worse than under the Turks?

⁸ Giandomenico and Gianandrea Romeo led an ill fated rebellion in 1847; Benedetto Mussolino was the leader of the Calabrians who attempted to support the anti-Bourbon forces in 1848 and 1849. Joseph Bonaparte and Joachim Murat, who succeeded him as King of Naples, relied on the liberals, who were bitterly persecuted after the collapse of French power. Abba is conjuring up the tragic scenes of half a century.

In the Port of Naples, 31 August

The sky, the bay, the island, Vesuvius standing proudly in the burning blue sky, the countryside in its dress of delicate colours that fade away till they blend with the air itself—is all this indifferent to what is happening? At any rate the sprawling city itself, almost frightening to contemplate, must be boiling with passion, easily to be imagined. There's the Royal Palace! It was from those balconies that Ferdinand II pointed out prisoners in jail to his children, telling them that their chains were the first things young princes should learn about.

In the distance one can see an endless column of soldiers marching down a street leading to the sea. Who knows what will be their fate in a few days from now? I gaze at the sea around the ships. Perhaps where the *Carmel* now lies is the very spot where the corpse of Caracciolo floated up to the surface, seventy years ago.⁹ Among these old boatmen rowing round our ship there may be some who saw it. Yet to us the episode seems to belong to the dark days of long ago. Police boats go the rounds, but some Neapolitans have managed to come aboard and not minded being seen chatting with us. All they can talk about is Garibaldi and how they long for his coming. When will he come?

One of our fellow passengers, who has taken a turn through the city, tells us that there is talk of a great event in Calabria. Garibaldi has made 15,000 men under General Ghio surrender at Soveria Manelli. Whatever will the King of Naples do? Really one can hardly restrain a certain pity for him.

⁹ Caracciolo, see note 4, p. 126.

September 1860

Weighing anchor, Civitavecchia. 1 September 1860

Captain Lavarello, an old sea-dog from Leghorn, called us aside and suggested a splendid plan.

‘Look yonder! That Papal warship is the *Immacolata*. What do you say to a little bit of piracy? All of you? All right, hold hard for a bit, then tell all those red-shirts to pay attention to me. We’ll pounce on the captain of the *Carmel* and his men and stow ’em below without hurting a hair of their heads, but they’d better look out if they interfere! A few of you lower yourselves over the side down a hawser and make a surprise attack on the Papal schooner, push the few lads aboard into the holds, then make fast a rope. I’ll take command of the *Carmel* and tow the *Immacolata* away full steam ahead. When they’ve got her engines running, I’ll go aboard, we’ll let the *Carmel* go where she likes and we’ll sail off to Calabria and make a present of the schooner to Garibaldi.’

The thing seemed as good as done and we were already relishing the adventure. It was like something out of Byron. One could imagine the shrieks of the ladies and the amazement of the French captain with us and of a French sentry on the edge of the quay! And then the flight over the sea! What perils! What unknown hazards! But, all of a sudden, the *Carmel* hoisted her anchor and farewell to all that! As we sail away I gaze at the mountains of Latium. It was on these very waters that Garibaldi, as a youth, first thought of Rome.

2 September

A mother’s heart! That fair French lady has been staring for three days with shining eyes at one of our men wounded at Milazzo. A fine looking lad who makes me think of Pulci’s Baldovino, because he knows his father acted as a spy for the

Austrians.¹ I noticed it from the first day out and hoped no one else did, for I should not have wished to see the lady, who bears such a load of sorrow, laughed at. But it is only too easy to think ill of people and as I write I have tears in my eyes. A short while ago the lady approached me and said:

'Do you know that soldier with his arm in a sling? Would you ask him to have a word with me?' I could read the rest in her eyes and I asked her if her dead son was very like him.

'Yes, indeed!' she replied. 'For three whole days I seem to have seen him once again, but my poor son is really yonder, buried in sacred Lebanon earth. How did you know, though?'

I didn't stop to tell her that the French captain had told me and ran to the bows to fetch the soldier. I spoke to him and he stared hard at me. Then he said: 'Let's go!' So the young man and the lady met in public without paying any heed to the curious eyes watching them. Over their heads the clear blue sky seemed to rest lightly on the mountain tops of Argentaro and Elba. I left them and went aside to think. A curious memory comes back to me at this juncture. I once heard a mother in my village at home say to her son who had returned from the Crimean war: 'I'd have sought you out had you been ill, or wounded, or killed.' 'And what if I'd been buried?'—he replied, and she said: 'I'd have recognized your very bones!'

Well, I take back what I have just been saying! Human nature isn't so bad as it seems! When the lady embraced and kissed the young man as though she had gone out of her mind there wasn't a snigger; they all understood and some wept. But the younger of the two Catanian girls stared as though her eyes would drop out of her head. If one were only a king of ancient days and could take her by the hand and lead her to that fine, strong, young man and clasp it in his and say to them: 'Go and get married, I ennoble you with the title of Count or Duke. Love each other and make your own Paradise.'

¹ In Luigi Pulci's poem *Il Morgante* (see note 3, p. 87) the traitor Gano's son Baldovino is a loyal follower of Orlando.

Naples, 14 September

Ten or twelve days ago when I saw Naples from the harbour, I should have liked to throw myself overboard in order to get there by swimming. Now that I'm here I don't feel the same about it . . . perhaps I am dazed by it all. Vast, splendid, heterogeneous; one loses one's way in it; it is a city magnificent even in its squalor. Never have I seen such an open display of filth. I've made a tour of the slums. One's brain reels, it is as though one traversed a swamp. People swarm, so that you have to squeeze yourself small to get through and end by being deafened. But on all these faces there is an air of lively expectancy. What do they want? What do they hope? Who can say? If one night they should rise in wrath, shouting out the name of one or other of their Saints, what would become of us, of Garibaldi? Yet he is quite unruffled in the Angri palace. It is we puny ones of little faith who feel dubious. He has enough to move mountains and feels the spirit of the people strong within him. Has he not done all he set out to do? What could we, a few thousand men, have done if he had not been our leader? Could all the Generals of Italy rolled into one, with all their skill, have done what he has done? There was need of a heart like his, perhaps of a head like his, and that face that makes one think of Moses, of Charlemagne, of some Warrior-Christ! You only had to see him to be won over.

14 September. In the Barns at Naples

I have rejoined my brigade. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, to compare with this feeling of being absorbed into the life of a great body of youth, love, and valour. I've imagined all the places they've been through: Catanzaro, Tiriolo, Soveria, Rogliano, Cosenza; Eber's brigade marched all that way through Calabria, 'The sky their tent, the earth their bed', but without firing a shot. Daniele Piccinini, the best captain in the brigade, told me the whole story.

Nearly all our Divisions, coincided at Cosenza, as though by pre-arrangement. Had Bixio intended this to be so? They were

drawn up on the spot where, sixteen years before, the Bandiera brothers had been shot.² It was a commemorative parade for the fallen heroes. Bixio pronounced a stirring address: 'Soldiers of the Italian revolution, soldiers of the European revolution; we who pay respect to God alone now bow in reverence before the grave of the Bandieras. Here are our Saints.' The Divisions listened in silence to his speech, which was brief and eloquent, and as stormy as the sea on which he had spent half his life. Piccinini says that if they had been asked whether they would change places with the dead, everyone of them would have replied 'yes'. For Bixio spoke of them in such a way that they passed before us living and triumphant so that their death seemed better than our own victories. For sure, martyrdom is more divine than triumph!

While this ceremony was taking place at Vallo di Crati, Garibaldi was entering the city of Naples almost alone, saluted by the troops left behind by Francis II, and acclaimed by the populace, which must have looked like the people of Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday. Things to turn a man's head, to make him stretch out for a crown . . . but Garibaldi passed on smiling, and did not even give a glance at the Royal Palace.

Naples, 15 September

Off we go for Caserta as hard as we can! Yesterday the Royalists came out from Capua, and who knows their objective? It is no distance, they say, from Capua here and there's practically nothing to stop them, save a handful of red-shirts. How terrible their sudden return would be! Ruffo, Fra' Diavolo, and the orgies of 1799!³

² The brothers Attilio and Emilio Bandiera made an unsuccessful attempt to start a rebellion after landing in southern Italy in 1844. They were executed near Cosenza (see note 4, p. 90).

³ Colletta's account of the cruelties of the reactionaries in 1799 made a deep impression on Abba. Here he refers to the anti-liberal Cardinal Ruffo, leader of the so-called *Sanfedisti* and Michele Pezza, called Fra' Diavolo, who committed many atrocities on the Bourbon side.

Caserta, 15 September

Yesterday's sortie was only a reconnaissance, though in strength. The Hungarian legionaries can't be driven from their chosen positions. The Neapolitan cavalry charged and charged again, but they broke against the Hungarian positions like waves against the rocks. Their infantry then advanced, but Tanara's and Corrao's *Bersaglieri* charged them with the bayonet and made them retreat, helter-skelter, and pursued them right to the walls of the citadel. They had a bad time going back, for the fortress artillery fired point-blank at them.

* * *

General Türr is most capable and, at the same time, mild! You wouldn't think so from his fierce looks. He has spilled little blood in quelling re-action. No one was executed at Avellino, none at Ariano; and to the latter place he went almost alone, yet pacified it. The day before yesterday he dispatched Major Cattabene to Marcianise, a large place not far from here, where the people had risen to the old Bourbon war-cry of '*Viva Maria!*' When he had quietened everything down, Cattabene returned, having executed only two out of the fourteen condemned to death. The people of Marcianise vociferated that they wanted the other twelve executed too, and sent a deputation to Türr to beg for this satisfaction. 'No! no!' says Türr, 'pardon, oblivion, reconciliation; we're not here to carry out your petty vendettas.'

16 September

No one's to know! Don't breathe it! Garibaldi is going to Sicily for some undisclosed reason. But what could happen if the Bourbon troops in Capua got to know he is no longer here?

20 September

Yesterday we made a great demonstration against Capua. They say this was to enable other forces of ours to capture Caiazzo, a large place on the farther side of the Volturno. They also say it was to test the enemy, once and for all, and discover how many of them remain loyal to their fugitive king. Much blood was shed. Too much ardour, in both officers and men.

The action began on the extreme left, then hell was let loose down the whole front. We of Eber's, on the Sant' Angelo road, had the least opposition. We did, indeed, see riflemen, infantry, and artillery preparing to come against us, but a detachment of our troops with two guns opened up against them. Their fire was so accurate and heavy that the enemy column retreated. It was then pursued, and our guns were taken right up to the fortress. They carried on firing as long as one gunner was left standing, defying forty pieces firing at them. Then, as it was seen that a sortie was in preparation to capture the guns, the *Bersaglieri* of the Milan brigade rushed up and dragged them to safety.

It was precisely at that moment that we could hear shouting on our right—'He's here! He's coming! The General! Garibaldi!' And from the direction of Sant' Angelo came Garibaldi, radiant. Under his eyes we were ordered to move to the left to throw back a new attack from the Bourbon troops who had once more come out from Capua. We fell on the flank of their column and it disappeared. It seemed to be over in a flash, but we had casualties. Captain Marani from Adria lay with the others, his arm shattered, a fair, handsome man; who knows what mutilation he will suffer.

Let me now celebrate the fallen. I did not know Colonel Puppi who was disembowelled by shrapnel almost at the gates of Capua. I feel sad at never having seen him, almost as though I were at fault.

Then what of poor Captain Blanc from Belluno? He had sacrificed his rank of Grenadier officer and now he has lost a

leg here. And Cozzo, Narciso Cozzo, the Palermitan baron who looked like a gentleman of the Altavilla stock, preserved alive as a specimen of the race. Well, he was laid low by a bullet that found him among the Genoese Sharpshooters, that splendid élite that has sworn always to be first.

28 September

Every morning now for five days we have been stood to and have remained under arms for hours at a time. That's the way to test one's nerve! It is a hard ordeal, this preparing to die and then learning that the time is not yet, and then wondering if tomorrow is the day. But some tremendous event is about to happen. There is a hint of approaching storm in the air, of tragic happenings. The bulletin of some evenings ago spoke vaguely of heavy attacks and contained some '*in the eventuality of*'s which made one tremble. Not out of fear, no, but out of anxiety for our country's cause. '*In the eventuality of . . . we should try to fall back on Maddaloni.*' And what then? It means, of course, that all would be lost and that at Maddaloni we should all die.

* * *

Well, we can put up with it, but in Caserta there are innocent people who suffer, the wives and daughters of Bourbon officers besieged in Capua. There can hardly have been a more tragic spectacle in time of war. At night many of these women, who are starving, beg from our men. And, it must be admitted, not all have the decency and courtesy to give and turn away. The next day some of these men may be at the front, perhaps fighting against the husbands and fathers of the women whose misfortune they have not respected. So to hunger and the results of hunger is added a third horror—blood!

30 September. Evening; in quarters at Falciano, near Caserta

All the afternoon the guns of Capua have thundered; now, as the evening bell tolls, all is silent. There is no doubt now;

the Neapolitans are coming out, and in strength! Their patrols are probing here and there along the whole Volturno front and this morning they tried to cross the river at the Triflisco ferry. But Spangaro's men repulsed them.

I know that Garibaldi has visited Bixio at the Maddaloni Pass, down our way, and that solemn words were spoken and that Bixio has been inspired to act the part of a Leonidas. 'As long as I am alive, no one shall get through here,' he said, and he will keep his word.

October 1860

1 October, 3 a.m.

After one's heart gives a jump comes a feeling of great sadness! A sound of galloping and up comes a Scout on a horse: Colonel Bassini! Colonel Cossovich! Then trumpets blow. How raucous is the note from the picket guard and how ill-omened! But the reveillé that trills forth like a mountain lark from our courtyard would awaken the dead. This is the trumpeter Viscovo and he pours his whole soul into it. When he puts his instrument to his mouth he seems to lose his identity and float away in music. He seems to say 'Oh to die! Oh to die like this!' Poor little waif, picked up somewhere in Sicily as we marched along the great road that leads to a united Italy, he came to us with that frail body of his, and only sixteen! What is he searching for? Nothing more than death! Virgil must have imagined Misenus, son of Aelus, like this, him who surpassed all others in inspiring heroes with his trumpet.

1 October, Caserta, in the Courtyard of the Royal Palace

Here we are, nearly the entire Türr division, in reserve. The battle is raging on a wide perimeter that would need a complete sweep of one's arm to indicate it. Well, none of us are dying, but we suffer like souls in Limbo. I look at the faces around me; some are deadly pale; some are gay; others are thoughtful; still others, vacant. Who knows what mine's like?

In one corner of the courtyard there is a battalion of the Savoia regiment, now known as the King's Brigade. The soldiers are in tents and officers stand around, fearing perhaps that some of their men may nip out and join us. They watch us, though, and envy us, for, unlike them, we are waiting for our call at any moment. But why shouldn't they be called? What have they come here for? I see a Captain, a typical Savoyard,

certainly one of those of '48. He gazes at us with his frank eyes, in which I seem to see the thoughts of all his compatriots who have been lost to France.¹ Perhaps he is sad, for they were of the best. Now when in war the cry goes up, *Savoia!* Savoy cannot answer.

* * *

Here's another captain in Victor Emmanuel's army! He's as young as I am and a captain already. I thought he was one of ours who, out of vanity, get themselves a uniform. But I saw that he was closely followed by some gunners, regulars from Piedmont, some of them with the Crimean medal. They have come from Naples, looking for Garibaldi, with whom they wish to enrol, they and their captain together. He is a Piedmontese nobleman called Savio.

'Well, what are they coming for now?' asked one of our officers. 'Afterwards they'll claim to have done the whole job themselves and get the honour and all the rest of it.'

'Ah, my friend, let's provide them with the guns and let them get on with it—you'll see Garibaldi won't adopt your attitude.'

Here comes a carriage from Santa Maria with a woman in it. Flushed face, vigorous gestures, who ever is she? An angel, a fury, or what? She's talking with a Hungarian colonel, who must be telling her frightful things, for she clasps her head in her hands. What is it? Perhaps that the dead and wounded are already to be numbered in hundreds, or that disaster is about to erupt on us from Capua? Oh dear! Why isn't she an Italian? Her name was Miss White² and she is now the wife of Mario, one of our best. Perhaps I have seen the loveliest head that could be shattered today by a miserable bullet fired by some soldier, oblivious of what he had done.

* * *

¹ A reference to the cession of Savoy to France (see note 1, p. 1).

² Jessie White (1832-1906) married Alberto Mario the close friend and follower of Mazzini. She wrote several works in favour of the Italian movement, including a biography of Mazzini.

Now comes one of the Scouts from Maddaloni at full gallop. 'Where's General Türr? Where is he? Bixio is asking for help.' Gracious, Bixio imploring help! Things must be desperate. Oh sun, that has witnessed so many terrible things on this earth. Oh God, do not let Italy perish here, today. . . .'

* * *

Number one Battalion, first two companies, shoulder arms, right turn, march! It's our turn now! Such as we are, a mere handful, we're going to support Bixio, wrens to help a vulture!

1 October, 2 p.m.

We climbed the mountain, turning about apprehensively to look at Caserta behind us and, in the distance, Santa Maria and the open country, all smoke and confusion. From beyond Mont Tifata we could hear gunfire, sounding like echoes, but really coming from another battle. Very soon, on the opposite slope from that we are now climbing, we shall come on Bixio's camp. By the sound of the gunfire it seems as though he is retreating. But, once we are up at the top, what a sight meets our eyes! All the way down the slopes to the left, on the great aqueduct,³ and beyond, is a swarm of red-clad men and cries as though from a hundred thousand throats. Lower still, black dots retreating, beaten Bourbon troops taking the bitter way of flight. On the main road, beyond the range of our most advanced troops, there is a dense mass of cavalry. Two guns are still firing their shells here and there from a distance; Parthian shots!

Bixio comes back and there is victory in his look! 'Who are you people?' he asks Captain Novaria—'Eber's men'—'Go down that way to Valle as fast as you can and put yourselves under the orders of Colonel Dezza.'

³ The aqueduct (otherwise called the Bridge, or the Arches of the Valley) was a lofty three-tiered structure pierced by arches built by the architect Vanvitelli to carry water across a valley to Caserta palace.

1 October, 3 p.m.

Far away here, on the steep of Monte Calvo, I have been reminded of my own lovely countryside, Le Langhe, almost unknown to the rest of Italy. For a moment I have felt, seen, and enjoyed the hills of home.

I was making my way across those lofty scrub-covered heights along a track where only those born to suffer and sweat and pray to God for his aid, that is to say poor peasants, had gone before, when suddenly an officer seemed to leap up from under the ground. His face was bleeding, his shirt was all torn and he had the stump of a sabre gripped in his hand. He called out: 'Where are you off to?' 'To my company above Valle.'—'And where have you come from?' 'From General Headquarters.'—'And Bixio?' 'Victorious!' On exchanging these few words, I realized I was talking to one from my own part of the country. 'Who are you?' I said and I already began to taste the happiness of having met a compatriot in a red shirt. 'I am Sclavo from Lezegno.'—'And I am so and so.' Then we fell on each other's necks. I have never felt the close ties of my native place so strongly as at that moment. Our rivers, the many-channelled Bormida and the Tanaro, all those fair mountains, our towns and villages, the home of such excellent people, good, modest, simple, and content with little! He then told me how he came to be here in such poor shape. Only a few hours before, in one of the last advances, he had fallen into the hands of Bavarians, who had dragged him away, loading him with indignities. But he had managed to escape and was on his way back when he ran into me, one from his own home district! It probably never occurred to him that I can sing his praises through our valleys.

Towards evening

News begins to trickle in, but still vague. Gunfire has died away. We have been victorious at Santa Maria, Sant' Angelo, all along the line, after a battle that went on for ten hours. Here, on the left flank, among the Castelmorone gorges, the

Pass was held by Major Bronzetti and half a battalion against Bourbon troops, six times as numerous. He died, many died, but the enemy couldn't get through. What must the men feel, who now lie down to rest after such an achievement? And what has become of the souls of those who have fallen? One simply cannot believe that they have ceased to exist and that nothing of them remains. On the battlefield death seems hardly death! Here it is a mere transition.

Above Valle, 2 October, morning

Who should be honoured in the words of Sallust? 'The battle over, then you should consider the great daring, the strong spirit shown. . . .' There were the Bavarians who climbed up to find their death on the peak of Monte Caro, held by our men; there were red-shirts who rushed so impetuously in pursuit of the foe almost to the outskirts of Valle, and fell there. Bavarians lying dead in their grey uniforms look fierce still, stout, thick-set fellows, no longer young and some with wrinkles. If you investigate their flasks you will find them still half-full of brandy. They must have eaten and drunk well a few hours before fighting against our men who had little enough with which to fill their bellies. One of them had found a small enclosure of dry-stone walling, right on the top of Monte Caro, made by shepherd boys, perhaps in idle sport. He occupied it and couldn't be dislodged, not even when his comrades had fled and he was alone. They had to finish him off like a mad beast, as he kept lunging out fiercely with his bayonet. In his pocket-book it was found his name was Stolz, from some Bavarian village. Who knows? Perhaps on that mountain peak, he thought he was saving the throne for fair Sophia, daughter of German kings, come from his own country to rule in the sweet land of Italy. Now he lies quiet as one who has done his duty. He is stretched out on his left side and seems to be asleep; or is he peeping and listening? Our men come up, one after another, to look at him. Well, it is good to end so, rather than of old age in a bed, or perhaps on straw after causing many others to suffer too. It is nice that all look

at him with respect, only regretting that such valour was wasted.

Tonight, on sentry-duty close to the corpse, a young Sicilian from Bivona, a nobleman of sorts and still almost a boy, kept calling out to the corporal. His voice seemed to come from the pit of all woes. The corporal ran to him: 'What's the matter?'—'Nothing.' But at last the corporal understood, for the youth was trembling and staring at the corpse only a few yards away.

'Ah, you're scared of that?'

'Yes, corporal!'

'Imagination!'

* * *

I paid a visit, yesterday, to all the small plateaux in turn, that descend the mountain like steps. Here it was that a hundred and fifty of Boldrini's men held up a couple of battalions of Bavarians, attacking from Valle. They held them sufficiently to let a few re-inforcements from Menotti's command come up, but it was not enough. Boldrini was wounded, and many of his officers were killed or wounded and it looked as though this strong position was to be lost. Menotti and Taddei went to Colonel Dezza:

'Colonel, it will be disastrous if the enemy turns this wing! He'll get between Villa Gualtieri and Caserta and in an hour he'll be down in the plain and the whole Terra del Lavoro will be roused in support of Bourbon re-action. Our people fighting on the River Volturno will have hostile forces in their rear, and who knows what will happen in Naples, just waiting for such an opportunity—Italy may be lost again today.'

That was the moment when the *Picciotti*, the Sicilian volunteers, covered themselves with glory. Two months before, they were riotous on embarking for the continent; it appeared they had no notion of any Italy besides their own three-cornered island. Marching through Calabria, however, they have become new men and they have won our respect here. They charged like veterans.

Down on the small plateaux, among the few poor trees that

cannot flourish in the stony ground, there are, ah! so many red-shirts lying who will never move again! I counted some twenty here and there, some of them recognizable by their swarthy, almost moorish, hue, as volunteers from the Vallo di Mazzara, where Bixio raised men. But there are fair, northern, almost girlish heads among them. I passed by one who could not have been older than sixteen and, speaking for myself and for him, I uttered words that, had I been able to transcribe them, would have been a masterpiece of poetry. A piece of biscuit was poking out of his haversack. Had I known who he was, I would have carried that morsel back to the girl who must have loved him and told her to treasure it all her life through.

I hear that many are missing and that more than twenty officers are either dead or wounded. And this only in our small section and out of so few men! So what are the losses all down the line, at Villa Gualtieri, at the Aqueduct, at the Mill and down on our left? It is a long front on such a strange curve that Maddaloni, on the extreme right, was at the back of those fighting on the Volturmo! When the full losses are known there will be much mourning.

2 October, about 11 a.m.

We can see a large party of Bourbon soldiers, perhaps those who tried to get past Bronzetti yesterday, twisting and turning up and down the steep slopes of Caserta Vecchia, as though they did not know which way to fly. On all sides we can see the red shirts of our men who are encircling them. Seen from this vantage point of Monte Caro, it is like a Royal hunt. The Bourbon soldiers are now concentrating as though to stand and defend themselves among the tumbled ruins that lend the landscape its sad tone of past grandeur and melancholy. What is the meaning of those rifle-shots? Very shortly Bixio will be there. We can see from here the long line of men climbing the mountain and its head is almost at the plateau. When Bixio started he said to his men: 'You won't eat till all those have been captured!' It looks as if the Royalists have recognized

him; there is some confusion—a horseman gallops out from their midst and then returns.

Now their retreat is cut off from the rear. They set off in the direction of Sant' Angelo, then come back. They go down towards Caserta Nuova—no, they climb up again. . . . A white flag! What an impression one gets from the yell of triumph that fills the air over there. The earth seems to shake, everything is in motion, our men run in from all sides—a great stillness—they have surrendered.

3 October

However long we waited, those we beat the day before yesterday did not return. If only we had had cavalry to pursue their flying tails! It would not have been cruelty, for they were all foreign mercenaries. But those captured yesterday at Caserta Vecchia were Italians and they were indeed from the column which came to grips with Bronzetti at Castelmorone and couldn't get past him. It would have been bad for us had they succeeded!

4 October

Yesterday, Telesforo, who seems to drink in everything he sees with such passion (perhaps because he feels he is not long for this world), came to visit me from Santa Maria and told me to come with him. 'Where to?' I said. He replied: 'To see what there is to be seen (quoting Dante) "*At the end of the bridge near Benevento*".'⁴

'Let's go!'

It was almost night. Once down from Monte Caro we passed through the hamlet of Valle, ten hovels looking like ragged old crones. The day before yesterday, as the Royalists went through on their way to the battle, the women in those houses leant out of the windows shrieking like furies: 'Long live the

⁴ Abba is here again looking for literature in life. All Italians know of the presumed fate of Manfred at the battle of Benevento (see note 4, p. 90) because of Dante's sympathetic references to it (*Purgatorio* III, 112-145).

King and Death to . . .', yes—to us! They say they were heard half-way up the mountain and that they created more effect than the advancing battalions!

On and on we trudged along the big road. But wherever is this bridge? Like children, we always imagine things to be nearer than they are; but Benevento was a long way farther on. We met no living soul, but, every now and again, in the fields by the roadside, there were corpses, perhaps soldiers who had been wounded the day before yesterday, died on the way and been thrown out of carts.

We couldn't find the bridge!

'Yet,' said Telesforo, 'if we keep going, sooner or later we should hear water—I should like to see it running in starlight, I'd like to hear the bridge echo under our feet, I should like to drop a stone from the parapet and imagine myself an Angevin soldier and that Manfred lay below. Antiquity, that which is no more, is everything for me. What lives is nothing. I feel myself to be nothing. I would never have followed Garibaldi had I not felt he belonged to antiquity.'

So spake Telesforo and made me sad to hear him.

At that moment we heard horses trotting from the Volturno direction. This is it! They must be Bourbon Scouts! Down into the fields! Three horsemen went swiftly by and I too felt a waft of antiquity. I thought of the riders sent by Charles of Anjou on the track of Manfred who was thought to have fled from the battle. The living riders, however, were some of our own Scouts, bold, even reckless, young men. We could hear them talking gaily in the Lombard dialect. So back we got to the road and trudged on for quite a while, pursuing our fantasies.

'Manfred? Charles of Anjou?' continued Telesforo. 'The modern king is a coward. The day before yesterday Francis was in the midst of his 30,000 soldiers; he could have put himself at the head of a thousand horsemen, tried a point in our front, broken through, and galloped all the way to Naples in triumph! Either that, or be killed, pierced to the heart by one of our champions, by Nullo for instance. He couldn't do either, so he's finished. As for Charles of Anjou, let's say Victor

Emmanuel. There's a gap of 600 years between them, and instead of a Pope to present him with the southern kingdom, we have Garibaldi to invite him down! How I should like to see the meeting between those two—the King and Garibaldi!

We took our way back and, as we went, we talked away like a couple of friars, but every now and then Telesforo coughed and said he was cold. He huddled his old cloak about him and clutched the hems to cover his chest. Dawn seemed near when we reached our sentries. Some small fires were dying down on the slopes of Monte Caro and of Villa Gualtieri. The red shirts of our troops stood out in bold relief against the grey screes and among the greeny-grey of the olive trees. They lent life and a kind of emotion to the scene. Ranks of red-clad soldiers were going quietly over the Vanvitelli Aqueduct, on their way perhaps to relieve others on guard. But it was up there that at a certain moment in the battle our men met the Bavarians and some had fallen from that height. God! it's terrible to think of. And to think that at this time on the day before yesterday my dear Traverso woke up full of sturdy confidence, as indeed did the other Traverso and Stella too (all three of them landed at Marsala), and yet before midday they were dead for ever, as much part of 'antiquity' as those who had died in ages past.

Caserta, 7 October

I told my friend Sclavo that what he had witnessed at the Aqueduct he must record here in my notebook. He wrote as follows: 'Three or four days before the battle, Garibaldi came to Bixio and said: "I have complete faith in you; this is our Thermopylae." Such was our task and we all knew we had to stand or die. We waited.

'On the morning of 1 October Von Mechel's Division, eight or nine thousand men, advanced from Ducenta by way of Maddaloni, with the Aqueduct Pass as their objective. At the head of the column was a squadron of dragoons with helmets and red lapels; two guns and a battalion of Sharpshooters followed. When they got to the village of Valle the head of the column opened out with the Sharpshooters to the right and

they began to probe the high ground where I was with my company. They started firing systematically with their excellent rifles at five hundred yards, but it was too far out of range for us to reply. Meanwhile the main column marched on towards the Aqueduct, the centre of our front.

‘I immediately dispatched a certain Calogero, a man from Messina, who was attached to me as a scout, with a note to Major Boldrini to say we were under attack. The reply came that I was not to be taken in by any feint movement. It fell out badly, because that battalion of Sharpshooters was already pouring into a wood on our left and was beginning to surround us, keeping up a steady fire on us all the time.

‘At this point Major Boldrini flew to our aid with two companies and, without delay, charged forward in the direction of thick trees where flashes of rifle fire revealed the enemy’s position. “Cold steel,” he shouted, “*Viva l’Italia!*”

‘I’ve not yet told you that a bullet had already penetrated his chest and come out by the shoulder blade. I tried to support him and drag him away as the enemy was now charging from the wood and we had to retreat. But he would not have it and, pushing me away, said, “Leave me, I’m a useless man now.” So he stayed where he had fallen. We fell back overwhelmed, but after being reinforced by some fifty of Menotti’s *Bersaglieri* we came back again. I looked in vain for poor Major Boldrini. I learnt later that the Bavarians had lugged him, head and feet, down over the crags to Valle where they abandoned him and where he was found in a dying condition by our people after the victory.

‘Many of our men fell dead or wounded in our counter-attack, among others the Genoese Evangelisti and Carbone, who had both been with you at the Marsala landing. But this was nothing, we had hardly begun yet! You know how time flies. The attacks went on. Towards eleven, or shortly after, the Bavarians were up to Menotti’s position and they began to encircle the hill called Siepe, a bastion of Monte Caro. Here Bedeschini’s and Meneghetti’s companies received them with rifle-fire and the bayonet and repulsed them. Dezza, Menotti,

and other officers directed and also took an active part in the fighting.

'Meanwhile other Bavarians appeared on the top of Monte Calvo, dug in, and tried to position two mountain guns there so as to spray us below with shells and shrapnel. From that point they could perhaps push out columns against Bixio's rear. It would have needed only a few men to cut his communications with the Caserta Headquarters and to set all the Terra di Lavoro ablaze with Bourbon reaction. It was a moment of the greatest anxiety. Even the least expert of us could guess the great danger threatening. But, all of a sudden, a battalion could be seen up on the mountain. Is it ours? Yes, it is! Quite unexpectedly it was marching straight to the summit of Monte Calvo. It was a marvellous sight! The Commander could be seen in front with his hat on the point of his sword and one seemed to hear him shouting. The others pressed hard behind him with long strides in a compact body up the slope.

'It was Taddei.

'Their bold effrontery impressed the Bavarians who wavered but defended themselves and continued to resist and to cause casualties. But they broke and fled in rout, abandoning their dead and wounded together with the position.

'Those of us fighting down below watched the action above lost in admiration for the victors. At the same time we could watch the great dense Bourbon column making their attack in the centre at the Aqueduct, where Bixio was stationed with his *picciotti*. The situation was terrifying! If they break, we said, if they pass over Bixio's dead body, they will be in Naples this evening and there will be a repetition of the orgies of 1799.

'We could see them as they skirted the mountain slopes between the plain and the dry stone walls of the road parallel with the Aqueduct. Behind those walls we could see the red shirts of our men as they crouched, waiting as though spell-bound, without firing a shot. We really suffered; we trembled; I even heard someone curse and cry out: "But what are they doing?" When the Bourbon troops, however, came almost up to the line of walls, those red-shirts seemed to explode; a tor-

rent, a hurricane of men, poured over into the head of the column and there were ferocious yells and bayonet thrusts. We went hot and cold by turns.

'The Bourbon troops had no opportunity, or room, to spread out, so they took to flight, one section on the heels of another; away they went in complete disorder, and the whole column in confusion fled towards Valle as best they could.

'We dominated the spectacle from where we were and we understood that all that heroic mass of *picciotti* had been inspired by the spirit of Bixio. There were two heroes that day: Bixio and Taddei.

'In the evening we counted our fallen. But it was my battalion that suffered the heaviest losses. Innocente Stella was hit in the head by a bullet and died; Herter was wounded; both he and Stella were with us at Marsala. So were Rambosio and Rugerone. The latter, poor fellow, was hit in the stomach by a shell-splinter that came out at his back. They found him in a ravine in the evening and brought him down to Villa Gualtieri, where he lingered in pain for eighteen hours till death liberated him. Antonio Traverso of my own company met his death in a little wood near Menotti's battalion, one doesn't know how he got there. I found him next day with a bullet through his chest and a bloody white handkerchief clapped to his mouth. Of Boldrini's three companies, only some twenty men under Lieutenant Baroni of Lovere, wounded in his head, joined up that evening with Menotti's men and formed a nucleus when the broken battalion was re-formed.' That is what my friend wrote.

Caserta, 8 October

I wouldn't record their names, even if I knew them, and I have no intention of asking. All those who were present when they were read out by Garibaldi, in that tremendous voice of his, can never forget them, however much they might like to.

In the first courtyard to the left, as one enters the Royal Palace precincts, the battalions commanded by Taddei, Piva, Spinazzi, Menotti, Boldrini, with the remnant of Bixio's

division, were waiting for Garibaldi, who was to congratulate them on their victory at Maddaloni. They were drawn up on the four sides of the courtyard, facing the centre.

'Microscopic Division, about turn!' shouted Bixio to the troops, and he is not a man to have said so in joke. They called those battalions a Division before the action, perhaps to make them sound bigger, but they were hardly a brigade then, now you could call them companies.

Garibaldi then entered the courtyard with his Hungarian-style hat in his hand and, directly he was in the middle of the square, he addressed the men as follows: 'Heroes of the 18th Division, I thank you in the name of all Italy!' His speech was short, in his typical style, and he finished by reading out the names of those who had particularly distinguished themselves in action. The very air seemed shining with glory. Then Garibaldi's face darkened and his voice was raised in anger:

'Now the brave have had their reward, I have to punish the cowards.'

There was a shudder as three officers, called by name into the centre of the square, came forth from the ranks. I don't know how they found the strength to take the few necessary steps forward and not fall struck down by shame. Under the General's eyes they were then stripped of their badges of rank by a Major acting as adjutant. And yet they did not die! After that painful scene Garibaldi continued to speak to them as if he were saying farewell to the dead: 'Go, fall on your knees before your Commandant and beg him to give you a rifle, and when next you confront the enemy, see that you die.'

In the Convent of Santa Lucia, 9 October

You're going to Naples? There are too many busy-bodies there! Don't go there to have all the romance rubbed off! Stay here, oh Filibuster! These monkish cells are the place for us: what more do you need?

I pay great heed to Captain Piccinini, although he is only eight or nine years older than I am. Indeed I look up to him as

though he were the great Niccolò in person.⁵ The day before yesterday I found him under an olive tree, so radiantly happy that I could almost see the vision he had before his eyes. He was reading a letter *sotto voce* and, directly he saw me, came forward saying: 'My father now knows his son has been promoted captain and is so exultant that all my native mountains rejoice!'

His voice then fell and his eyes filled with tears and he embraced me and I felt puny indeed against his great heart. But to be such as he, straightforward and courageous, one must be born with such a heart. And then his modesty! How trying certain situations must be for him! At Caserta yesterday he was with Garibaldi when some American naval officers came to visit the 'Washington of Italy'. Here's the pattern of my officers, he said, pointing out Piccinini to them. Surely one would give anything to have half such words spoken by him about oneself. Yet Piccinini almost went out in mortification. But there it is; he has no idea that of all officers he is the one who most closely resembles Garibaldi. He has the same simplicity, the same good looks, the same goodness, and the same proud courage. He too could live in a wilderness, create his own world and forget the one made by men. I seem to see him, when all is over, going straight back to his Alpine home, to the solitude of Pradalunga. And if they ask him: 'What was it like?' he will reply as though he had just been for a stroll. But to that father of his he will tell all.

13 October

Nullò, Zasio, Mario, Caldesi with a dozen Scouts under the command of our Candiani, left yesterday at the head of a battalion for some distant objective; somewhere beyond the Volturno, who knows how much farther, where Samnium is, famous Samnium. Nullò the strength, Zasio the beauty, Mario the mind, Caldesi the goodness! Everything is represented! But what are they going to do? Some say to meet Victor

⁵ Niccolò Piccinini of Perugia (1375-1444) was a famous captain of mercenaries. There is no connexion with Daniele Piccinini except the name.

Emmanuel; others, to subdue a revolt. They seem to me like men going forth into the unknown.

14 October

Today I am really happy. I have seen the man who is even more wedded to the simple life than Garibaldi himself. A youthful face, although he is seventy, a sturdy figure unbowed by toil, hardships, and disasters of all kinds; dressed in rusty black—cap, overcoat, trousers—not in the least in military style—so I saw General Avezzana. Perhaps the Vicar of Wakefield was like this. He is of the race of men who advance with his gaze fixed on some distant goal, unseen by the world. Yet for them, that remote ideal springs from a living reality within them. As for his present outward appearance he looks like the Son of Man who had nowhere to lay His head. Such men will obtain food for the morrow, for even the birds of the air are provided for. To do good is sufficient for the day.

Men must have been like Avezzana when the parables of Jesus were heard along the shores of the lakes of Galilee. It is something to see him carelessly gird on his sword of honour, the weapon presented to him for one or other of his glorious feats in South America. They say he got back from those parts just in time to reach Caserta hot-foot, to meet with Garibaldi at the crisis of the Volturno battle, greet him and enter the fray. To have explored continents and oceans, have been a homeless wanderer from youth to old age, have loved and been faithful to Italy and have sworn to see her independent before his death; to have arrived to greet his friend on a battlefield such as the Volturno, he who was once Minister for War at the time of the Roman Republic and the other, who was then his subordinate and is now Dictator here! Don't talk to me of the chivalry of ages past! This is a classic tale, a lay of ancient Rome! . . .

15 October

There was a great event this morning. For the first time Victor Emmanuel's soldiers really fought side by side with Garibaldi's volunteers. I say 'really', because already on 2 October that battalion of the King's Brigade, which we left waiting in the Royal Palace courtyard, was used, together with a few *Bersaglieri*, to round up the Bourbon column from Caserta Vecchia. But that was an uninspiring feat of arms. Today, however, the Bourbon troops came boldly out from Capua and set off towards Sant' Angelo where they came up against *Bersaglieri* and regular infantry who blew them away like chaff. Colonel Corte's volunteers competed with them, to see who could do best. The Bourbon troops may wish to leave Capua again, but it is doubtful if they will ever dare to do so.

20 October

Let no dew nor rain ever fall on the villages of Pettorano, Carpinone, and Isernia as long as the memory of our poor fellows lasts, those who were tricked and hunted and slain in your fields and woods.

What remains of Nullo's column is coming in and their account is horrifying. Their tale is one of death and nothing but death. They still have before their eyes the bestial ferocity of peasants, soldiers, and friars killing and killing to the cry of '*Viva Francesco II! Viva Maria!*'

Poor Bettoni! His Soresina will see him no more. He was at the rear of the column, lying wounded in a carriage, with Lavagnolo and Moro riding by his side. They hoped to get him to safety at Boiano and then to gallop back as hard as they could to where Nullo was fighting and our men were falling, singly or in small groups, with their ears ringing with the savage yells of the furious village harridans; intimidated more by those unleashed bitches than by the great numbers of armed men who had attacked them. Alas for those poor cavalrymen! Lieutenant Candiani found them next day lying in the road

stripped naked and outraged. Ah! Samnium, dire Samnium! I feel a chill breath of air blowing across my brow as I did when that expedition set forth. From that day the name of the Caudine Forks rings in my head.⁶

25 October

Some curious influence must have passed over this neighbourhood. The inhabitants, as a trick of speech, either magnify or belittle things. The *Volturnus Celer* resounds today as in the verses of Lucan; one sees a majestic rush of green water racing clamorously to the sea. Yet one of its fords is known by the name of Scafa di Formicola (the Little Ant's Ferry). When we crossed, we laughed at the strange little name. Garibaldi had got Colonel Bordone to make a bridge of boats there, and over we got, though it was frightening to feel it rocking and the ill-connected planks opening and closing under our feet. We were men of Eber's, Bixio's, and Medici's divisions together with the Milan brigade. With us were the English Legion, fine-looking men, dressed as we were in red shirts and green uniforms, though of a superfine cloth and with belts as highly polished as though they had just come back from India.⁷

Today has been unfortunate. General Bixio's horse fell and the hero cracked his skull and broke a leg. He allowed himself to be carried to Naples and as he went he looked back at us enviously. He is only one man, but without him, there is a feeling of loss in the air.

* * *

We are camped on the edge of such a wood as the fleeing Angelica might have ridden through, although it is called Caianiello as though it were a clump of small shoots grown for a Christmas crib.

⁶ The so-called 'Caudine Forks' (narrow mountain passes) was the scene of a Roman defeat by the people of Samnium in 321 B.C.

⁷ The English contingent arrived too late to take part in any important action.

Meanwhile what are we here for? Capua is over there. We have found the Calabrians here and they tell us that the Bourbon troops occasionally appear in the low-lying land below. Far away to the right is Gaeta. Those must be the mountains old Colombo told me about when he described how he took part in Massena's siege operations in '85. While I am thinking of the man who was a soldier with Garibaldi's Legion in South America, he may be talking to my father about this very place and my father will question him, with who knows what emotion in his heart.

Oh, how I'd like to be that hawk and hurl myself across the sky, calling, calling through the darkening air. Now a bell is tolling . . .! Where is the sound coming from? '*Era già l'ora che volge il desio.*'⁸

* * *

Some say we're here to fight one last battle and that, while we're engaged against the 50,000 Bourbon troops who are still faithful to Francis II, Victor Emmanuel's soldiers, with himself in person at their head, are coming down through the Abruzzi by way of Venafrò. Others reply that we might get jars of good wine from Venafrò, that ancient wine beloved of Horace, but as far as set battles are concerned they are over and done with since the day of 1 October. Perhaps then we shall march to meet the King!

26 October

Should I live a thousand years, I shall never forget, but I could never set it down precisely and clearly, what flashed into my mind, rambling through the countryside beyond Maddaloni with Catoni. The idea came to him first. Six hundred years ago Charles of Anjou came here from Rome with the Pope's blessing and picked up Manfred's crown from among

⁸ A verse from Dante (*Purgatorio* VIII, 1) describing the evening hour when thoughts are nostalgic. Gray and Byron both drew inspiration from the passage in which the verse occurs.

the slain at Benevento. The Pope had promised it to him if only he could come and take it. Today a man of the people as brave as—ah well, comparisons are unnecessary—a man of the people as generous as none can ever be again, as simple as Curius Dentatus, as tactful and ingenious as Sertorius, as proudly disdainful as Scipio, in the name of the people snatches that crown from the King of Naples and says to Victor Emmanuel: 'It's yours!'

* * *

My head is in a whirl. I'm still full of what I have seen, and I write. . . .

A white house at a cross-roads, horsemen in red and horsemen in black mingled together, Garibaldi on foot; poplar trees shedding their pale dead leaves over the heads of regulars marching towards Teano. With my eyes I see the living soldiers, but in my imagination the great dead Romans of the second civil war, Sulla and Sertorius, who met at this very spot. Their figures loom gigantic as the mountains of Samnium in the distance, but perhaps they were really no bigger than the living men I see before me. What elements are lacking to bring about another civil war?⁹

All of a sudden, quite near, there is a roll of drums and the royal fanfare of Piedmont. All leap on their horses. At that moment a peasant, but half-clothed in skins, turned towards the Venafro mountains and, shading his eyes with his hand, stared hard, perhaps to read the time from some shadow cast by distant crags. Then, a cloud of dust swirled up, there was galloping and shouted commands and then: '*Viva! Viva! The King! The King!*'

Everything went black for an instant and I could hardly see Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel clasp hands or hear the immortal greeting: 'Hail, to the King of Italy!' It was mid-morning, Garibaldi talked with bare head, while the King stroked the neck of his handsome grey horse who arched her

⁹ Here Abba hints at the possibility of civil war between the modern monarchists and republicans.

neck under his caresses like an Arab princess. Perhaps Garibaldi felt sad, for he looked sad as Victor Emmanuel spurred his horse and rode away with himself on the King's left. Behind them followed a very large mixed cavalcade. Garibaldi's charger, Saïd, perhaps felt his master less masterful in the saddle, for he snorted and pulled to the side as though he wanted to carry him away into the desert, away to the Pampas, far away from this procession of Great Ones.

* * *

Sparanise, 27 October

If rumour is right everything is understandable. Was King Victor cold in his attitude when he met Garibaldi? True it is that Francis II is his cousin and that he had invited him to join in his great war against the enemies of Italy and that he had admonished him. Also there exists a certain letter! Francis wouldn't or couldn't heed and it was fortunate for Italy that he refused.¹⁰ He was as obstinate and impotent as his father and he now pays the price for both of them.

Perhaps then a certain aloof dignity of Victor Emmanuel's when he met Garibaldi was due to delicate reserve? Or are those right who think he was meditating on the strange fate of kings? However, all this is only gossip, which will pass as the wind passes without trace. Up to now one hears nothing but of the greatness of Garibaldi and knows nothing of those watching for the sun that is yet to rise.

* * *

Yesterday Garibaldi did not go to breakfast with the King. He said he'd breakfasted already, but later he ate bread and cheese in a church porch surrounded by his friends, sad, reserved, resigned. But resigned to what? Now we shall go back over the Volturmo, back to our camps or to who knows where.

¹⁰ Victor Emmanuel wrote a letter to his 'dear cousin' of Naples on 15 April 1860 offering an alliance on the principle of Italian national freedom. The offer was refused.

We shall no longer be a vanguard; they will put us at the rear. They say the General spoke in this vein to Mario. What afflicts him most is that he wanted to present a million armed men to the nation yet all that Italy gave him was twenty thousand volunteers.

November 1860

Naples, 2 November

We can hear guns thundering in the distance. They are bombarding Capua and we are out of it. Victor Emmanuel's gunners will not have much to do, because the garrison is only waiting for a decent excuse to give themselves up. Griziotti, our colonel, predicted it.

'General,' he said, 'let me fire a couple of shells at the citadel and they'll give in.'

But Garibaldi replied: 'No! If a child, a woman, or an old man should die because of a shell fired from our camp I should never forgive myself!'

Then Griziotti: 'But our young men are dying of fever at this siege; they pine away and are dying daily.' And Garibaldi:

'We came here to die!'

'Well, General, the Piedmontese will arrive and they won't be squeamish. They will make the city surrender by firing a few shells and then they'll say that everything we've done up to the present, before they came, counts for nothing.'

'Let them talk,' said Garibaldi, 'we didn't come here for glory . . .'

Naples, 3 November

All Saints day, All Souls day, and now the day when they present medals, a third celebration in this sad season.

In front of the Royal Palace, where all signs show that no Bourbon will ever set foot again, the San Francesco di Paola Square was decorated with flags. In the centre there was a chair, ladies, generals, and bigwigs surrounding Garibaldi, who was wearing the same hat he wore at Marsala. I saw Carini who is now a general, rejuvenated, his arm in a sling

and, by his looks, happy. The Hungarian Legion provided the Guard of Honour and the Piedmontese Grenadiers too. We waited with our backs to the Palace. At a certain moment Garibaldi rose and approached us, saying in his loud, clear voice: 'Soldiers of Italian independence. Veterans, although still young, of the army of liberation, I consign to you the medals given by special decree by the municipality of Palermo. Let us begin with the fallen, our fallen. . . .'

Then an officer began to read out the names of the dead, and there was a response in our hearts as we conjured up the image of each one of them in turn. But when today has gone, will there be no more solemn commemorations for them? A hundred names, humble or illustrious, were read out and at each one a thrill ran through our ranks. Were it better to be dead or alive? A feeling of gloom spread among us, masked as enthusiasm.

When our turn came, we were called up, one by one, to the dais where a young girl, standing on tiptoe, pinned a medal to one's chest and as she did so, peeped up at one with large smiling eyes. I don't know who she was and didn't inquire. Names mean nothing. I heard the General say, turning to a lady standing near him, 'I know all those faces, and I shall see them as long as I live.'

In the meantime the bands were playing and the Grenadiers' band seemed to say: 'That's enough, that's enough now, be off with you.'

Caserta, 9 November. Evening

Today the great Palace looked down the long avenue stretching far away in front as though wanting to reach Naples; it could see ranks of red-shirted battalions drawn up under the quiet trees, which looked gloomy under a lowering sky. The King was to come to review the whole of Garibaldi's army, some 12,000 men, who stood in parade order with rifles grounded. We waited. The King was due to come about two o'clock and a cannon-shot would announce his arrival. We

chatted in our places, and odd rumours, quips, and sarcasms spread along the ranks, material for poems or comedies. There were crude things said too, but there was little gaiety. Clouds came down over us and seemed to bring a chill with them, and as time passed we grew tired. Some Venetians of my battalion were whispering that when the King went by it would be a fine thing to surround him and take him up to the mountains and force him to declare war, with Rome and Venice as our objectives. Were they serious? Some certainly were, but most of them were only talking for talking's sake. In the middle of these discussions trumpets were heard on the right of the long line. Attention! The King!

The battalions got into order. Our hearts were beating; some approved, others not. Then a group of men on horses came trotting by. . . . Ah! He who rode in front was not the King, it was the man with the Hungarian hat and the poncho, those with him were all red-shirts. The hat pulled down over his eyes was a sign of trouble. They came and passed, leaving dismay behind them. Then they turned round at the end of the avenue and came and went like a whirlwind. Shortly afterwards the battalions were lined up by sections in column . . . it looked as though we were to march towards danger and we were all prepared. . . . Thus we approached the Royal Palace where we marched past Garibaldi, who stood at the great gate rigid as though carved in stone. And we knew this was the last hour of his command. We longed to throw ourselves at his feet crying out: 'General, why do you not lead us on to death? That is the road to Rome, scatter our bones along it!' But that meant civil war! And what about France, our close ally of last year?

The General was paler than we had ever seen him before. He watched us go by. One could guess that tears were near and that his heart was sore. I do not know who they were who stood near him. Only he counted, I saw no one, nothing else. Now I hear that the General is leaving for Caprera, to live as on another planet. Here I feel a gale of discord blowing up. I look at my friends. This wind will catch us all and churn us about

like leaves until each one of us falls at the door of his own home. Oh that we were really leaves, but Sibylline leaves, each bearing a word, and that they could come together again to spell a message of significance to Italy . . . poor sheet of paper . . . stay blank—let us have done.

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